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Friends of the Earth Australia

Number 32 June-July 1983 \$2.00



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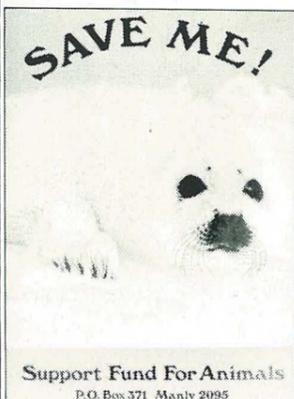
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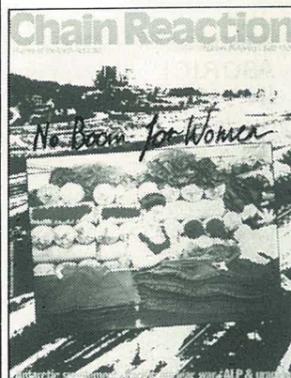
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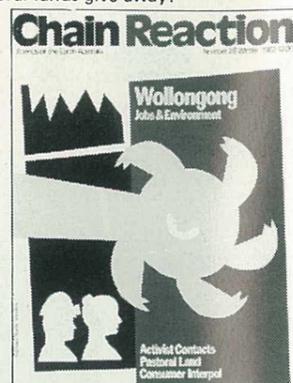
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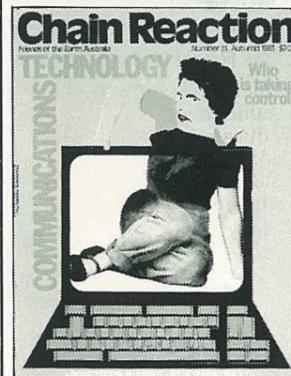
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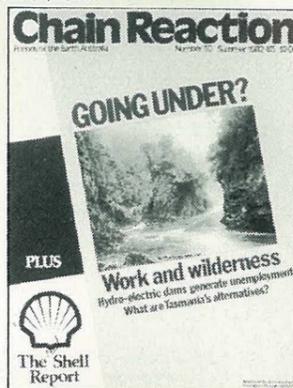
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## Chain Reaction

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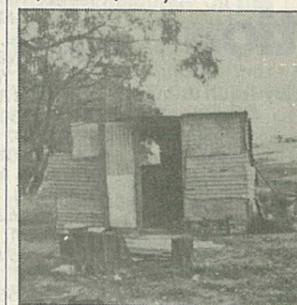
By Meredith Wilkie

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Cover. Aboriginal tent embassy, November 1982, to demand land rights legislation. Design: Correct Line Graphics / Roger Halley.

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## FOE GROUPS

### Toxic waste

The Australian Environment Council, a body comprising federal and state environment ministers, has recently commissioned studies on the design and siting of a national toxic waste incinerator. Friends of the Earth (Newtown) has written to the council, proposing the council convene meetings of representatives of environmental organisations from each state, to determine an acceptable strategy for the management of toxic industrial wastes.

The group has also submitted comments on a report being prepared for the New South Wales minister for planning and environment by the State Pollution Control Commission on the disposal of industrial liquid waste. The report is expected to recommend that a treatment plant be established to deal with that portion of Sydney's waste currently being landfilled at Castlereagh (see *Chain Reaction* 30, Summer 1982-83). Public submissions will be invited on the design of the plant; Friends of the Earth (Newtown) is attempting to extend public participation to the issue of site selection.

**Action:** Friends of the Earth (Newtown) is working on various hazardous chemical issues. For further information contact the group at the address listed below.

### FRIENDS OF THE EARTH MEMBERSHIP FORM

Dear Friends of the Earth

Please find enclosed my membership fee of \$ . . . . . (as per rates below).

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Membership fees: NSW \$16 (\$8 concession); Vic \$20 (\$15); WA \$15 (\$7.50) or whatever you can afford; Qld \$15 (\$10); SA, NT, Tas, ACT \$10 or whatever you can afford. *Chain Reaction* is sent free to all members of Friends of the Earth and some groups also send members newsletters and provide discounts at their bookshops. Enquire from your local FOE group. Make cheques payable to Friends of the Earth and post to the group nearest you - see list above. Donations are very welcome. Contact us for details on how to make tax deductible donations to FOE.



Local land owners and a FOE delegation inspect CRA's Eastville mine, 15 May 1983.

### No solution

Following success in the closing of Honeymoon and Beverley leach uranium mines in South Australia, Friends of the Earth (Collingwood) has been campaigning against plans for leach mining of gold in Victoria. CRA, among other mining corporations, hope to extract the gold contained in 'deep leads' - underground ancient river beds - by dissolving it in poisonous chemicals and pumping the solution to the surface. This process threatens to contaminate groundwater; the deep lead water in Victoria is of excellent quality, suitable for irrigation, stock and human consumption.

CRA has an experimental leach mine operating at Eastville, 40 km west of Bendigo. Local farmers have formed the Groundwater Protection Society, and, together with Friends of the Earth (Collingwood) and the Aboriginal Mining Information Centre, demand the permanent closure of all leach mining operations in Australia, the driest continent, where groundwater is of immense value.

### National Grant

Friends of the Earth has applied for a grant of \$25 000 from the federal government for 1983/84. For the last few years, FOE has received an annual grant of \$5000, an amount which hasn't increased despite inflation and an increase in the number of local groups. Last year FOE asked for \$20 000 and received only \$5000. Most groups are currently overdrawn or very low on funds. The new Labor government should be marginally more responsive to FOE's submission than the previous government, especially if the more sympathetic members of the party aid its passage through the bureaucracy.

### Friends of the Earth groups

- ADELAIDE** 310 Angas St, Adelaide, SA 5000 (08) 223 6917, (08) 223 5155  
**BLUE MOUNTAINS** 94 Waratah St, Katoomba, NSW 2780 (047) 82 2701  
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**CANBERRA** PO Box 1875, Canberra City, ACT 2602; 116 Lewin St, Lyneham, ACT 2602 (062) 47 8868  
**COLLINGWOOD** 366 Smith St, Collingwood, Vic 3066 (03) 419 8700  
**DARWIN** PO Box 2120, Darwin, NT 5794 (089) 81 6222  
**ELTHAM** PO Box 295, Eltham, Vic 3095 (03) 435 9160  
**HOBART** 102 Bathurst St, Hobart, Tas 7000 (002) 34 5566  
**LA TROBE UNIVERSITY** c/- The SRC, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Vic 3083 (03) 479 2977  
**MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY** Box 27, Level O, Union Building, Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW 2113  
**MONASH UNIVERSITY** Community Research Action Centre, Monash University, Clayton, Vic 3168 (03) 541 0811 ext 3141  
**NEWTOWN** PO Box 169, Newtown, NSW 2042 (02) 517 2139  
**NORTHERN YORKE PENINSULA**, c/- Valinor, 734 Moonta Mines, Moonta, SA 5558 (088) 25 2813  
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**RYDE** 18 Kokoda St, North Ryde, NSW 2113 (02) 88 2429  
**SYDNEY** Floor 2, 787 George St, Sydney, NSW 2000 (02) 211 3953  
**UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND** c/- SRC, University of New England, Armidale, NSW 2350  
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THE AGE

## The Shell Report

Shell's Australia

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then we should feel flattered that devoted so many pages of summer issue of *Chain Reaction* to an imitation of the Shell Report.

By Jenny Hocking



Shell's Australia: mined, refined and undermined

Collage by Tim Darling

Aurukun

North West Shelf gas project

Anthony Adair

te Relations

Manager

Company of

ralia Limited

Melbourne, Vic

You are invited to write

letters to *Chain Reaction*

with your comments on the

magazine or on other issues

of interest. Letters should be

kept within 300 words so

that as many as possible may

be published. Longer letters

may be edited. Write today

to *Chain Reaction*, Room 14,

Floor 4, 37 Swanston St,

Melbourne, Vic 3000,

Australia.

### Reply to Shell

Anthony Adair's letter in the autumn edition of *Chain Reaction* deserves a brief reply. It is not surprising that some points which Anthony Adair would have liked to see included in this report were omitted, for it was hardly the purpose of the 'Alternative Shell Report' to reproduce the company perspective presented in Shell's own *Shell Report*.

The purpose of the 'Alternative Shell Report' was to examine the process through which Shell's investments in key sectors of the Australian economy inevitably endow it with a correlating social and political influence. None of the points raised by Anthony Adair bear even remotely on this process; his concentration on Shell's percentage equity in certain projects entirely misunderstands (or indicates a refusal to confront) the nature of the control exercised by Shell.

Firstly, equity figures give no indication of the extent of control exercised by part-owners of a particular company. Although the Australian Bureau of Statistics sets a fairly high figure for control as being 25% of voting shares, the USA House of Representatives Committee on Banking and Currency suggested that a 3% shareholding may be 'sufficient for effective control if other shares are widely held'.

Secondly, the structure of Shell's operations is such that control of particular industries comes about more through Shell's involvement in all aspects of the production process ('vertical integration') rather than through high levels of ownership in individual companies. In this structure therefore it is not the percentage interest Shell holds in specific companies which is definitive; rather it is the relation these companies hold to each other which determines the extent of control Shell holds over the industry as a whole. The high degree of vertical integration which has long been a characteristic of the international oil industry seems likely also to be a feature of Shell's recently

announced investment strategy in the coal industry.

As for the glib assurance that 'anyone who thinks that the laws are deficient in any matter is free to campaign for a change in the law', this simply perpetuates the myth that the economic and political spheres are unconnected. That Shell has far greater resources with which to campaign for political change than have consumers, the Aurukun community, and even some governments, is obvious.

Finally, I must admit to being bemused by Anthony Adair's concern on behalf of Shell with 'the interests of accuracy', since a letter I sent to Shell on 18 May last year, 1982, requesting information towards the writing of this report, has yet to be answered.

Jenny Hocking  
Newtown, NSW

### Rural reaction

Our subscription, which was a gift, has expired and you ask us why we do not renew. We do not intend to subscribe for several reasons.

Our interest in conservation is centred on the land, water and forests that surround us and in other parts of Australia, and not in the diverse issues you report on.

I am a member of SCAP and ACF and these organisations represent our interests. Therefore, to avoid scattering our support too thinly, we concentrate on them.

There is very little content in *Chain Reaction* to interest a farming community or small business in a country town. We try to make people more aware of the environment through our work in these areas.

Mr & Mrs A Hall  
Yarrowonga, Vic

### Contemplation

With respect to 'Ecology and Ideology' in *Chain Reaction* 31, autumn 1983, I have several points to make about Ariel Kay Salleh's writing.

I support her assertion that marxism is simply another version of the destruction of nature for the sake of power and profit, however distributed.

## LETTERS

However, her following discussion about consciousness leaves something to be desired; if simply because language itself, in whatever form, is a reflection of experience, part of the process of consciousness and the primary source of human imposition upon nature. In other words language is the self-perpetuating process of dualism. We talk to ourselves.

She participates in this process with every word uttered or written. Every good mystic knows that silence is the tool of release from dualism and every good politician knows that language is the tool of control. Where the division of consciousness stems from, is a fruitless discussion but a rather fruitful subject for contemplation.

Her assertion, implicit though it is, and whether she realises it or not, is that language, as a tool of control, is a patriarchal contrivance that serves to impose the male view onto nature, and the male view onto women. I cannot accept this, as the origins of the language are too obscure, and anyone who makes a statement about the past (dim, dark, distant?) is imposing their own interpretation onto it.

The other element of her discussion was power. Or should I say politics? Where the chief expression of politics is violence, men against men, men against women, and (sometimes) women against women, then the environment must suffer as a consequence of the conflict within the human community. Humanity is the dominate species on this planet now, if only in terms of our ability to wreak havoc.

One last comment re her statement about science. Does she know what Heisenberg's uncertainty principle means?

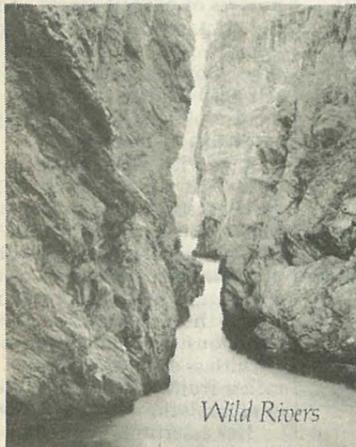
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Wild Rivers

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photographs by Peter Dombrovskis  
text by Bob Brown

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James McQueen

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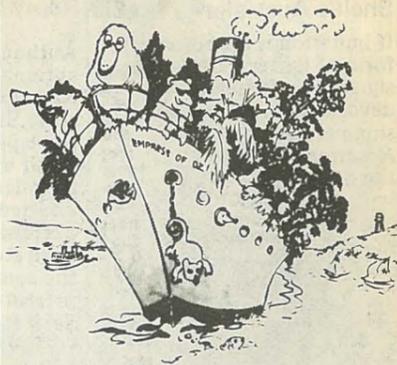
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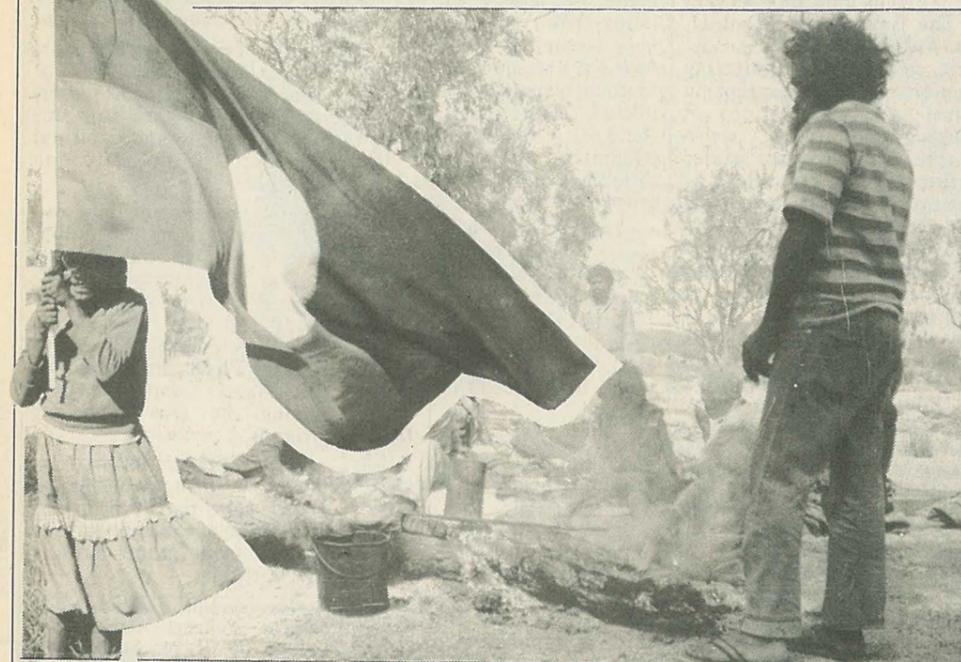


GRAPHICS

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## EARTH NEWS

### Welatye-therre: dam protest continues



Left: Annette Rice states her position on who owns the Welatye-therre sacred site near Alice Springs. The sacred site is threatened by whites' plans to build a recreational lake in the area. Right: The traditional owners at dinner camp, Welatye-therre.

Fifty traditional owners and custodians of the Mbantua area encompassing Alice Springs in the Northern Territory are continuing to occupy land near their registered sacred site 'Welatye-therre'. This action is aimed at preventing the NT government from going ahead with a dam in the area.

The dam was originally conceived as a recreational lake for Alice Springs. However, as Aboriginal protest has intensified and in the wake of a recent flood, it is now asserted that the dam will be built to aid in flood control.

Earlier this year, the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Paul Everingham, set 30 June 1983 as the deadline for negotiations with Aboriginal people over the future of the dam. Recently, however, he wrote to the chairperson of the Sacred

Sites Authority, Wenten Rubuntja, to say that the government would proceed with the dam.

In the NT Assembly, Mr Everingham said: 'The site itself will not be physically damaged but will be submerged'.

The sacred site is especially significant to women. The stones at the site represent the mythological tale of two women, one young and one old, who came to Alice Springs from Western Australia, pursued by a group of young men. When the women stopped at this place to catch tadpoles in a pool they were captured, raped and their breasts cut off.

In this area Welatye-therre (translation: two breasts), women have danced and sung for thousands of years to assert and strengthen their

relationship with the country.

The group of protesters are calling on people everywhere for support. They are enduring cold and wet conditions with minimal shelter. They do not own a vehicle and depend on supporters for transport to and from town for supplies. Some of the old people are quite frail and there are large numbers of children to look after.

Despite this, their strength is growing and news of their struggle is spreading throughout Australia.

Action: Donations and messages of support can be sent to the Welatye-therre Defence Committee, PO Box 2363, Alice Springs, NT 5750. Also send letters of support for the traditional owners to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Clyde Holding, and the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Paul Everingham.

### Roxby Downs land rights

The proposed Roxby Downs Olympic Dam mine in South Australia is situated on the traditional land of the Kokatha people. Western Mining Corporation (WMC) started exploration work around Roxby Downs in 1975 without consulting the traditional owners. Instead, WMC simply dismissed them, saying in an Environmental Impact Statement that the Kokatha people had been effectively rendered a non-viable group.

The final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on 15 April 1983 rejected a report of evidence on sacred sites compiled by the Kokatha people.

In January 1981, the Kokatha people approached Roxby Management Services to make their existence official. In October 1981, the Southern Lands Council was formed, representing a number of Aboriginal communities in the area including the Kokatha Peoples Committee (KPC). Richard Reid, chairperson of the KPC, summarised their position:

We have the primary interest in the land, based on prior occupation and permanent spiritual attachment to it; miners and other Europeans have a temporary and secondary interest based only on economic values.

The KPC are attempting to persuade the Federal government that they will be unable to assess the EIS without the KPC report.

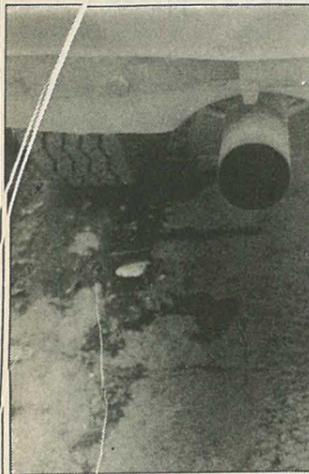
The KPC are acting now to prevent further damage to sacred sites.

Action: Support is urgently needed. Send donations to Kokatha People's Committee c/- Campaign Against Nuclear Energy (SA), 291A Morphett St, Adelaide 5000.

Source: *Anti-Nuclear Times*, Campaign Against Nuclear Energy South Australia, March 1983.

# EARTH NEWS

Only 800 tonnes of lead expected in Melbourne's air this year.



KEV WILSON

## Apartheid cruelty

The inhuman practices of the apartheid South African regime are well known. No matter what age, young and old are not exempt.

A 103-year-old woman, Emma Mgwaba, was taken to court in Johannesburg in December 1982 for refusing to demolish and move out of her make-shift shack in Soweto. The local council planned to evict twelve other elderly women from their homes without making any provision for alternative accommodation.

At the other extreme, a 3-year-old girl, Dudu, was arrested with her parents, Alex and Khosi Mbatha, when security police raided their home in Soweto. The police told her mother: 'She's a terrorist and a communist, and must also go to jail.'

After spending two days with her mother in a putrid cell, the police took Dudu away, telling Khosi that her daughter would be put in a home for juvenile delinquents. In fact, the child was dumped back at her empty

## Lead petrol

Petrol with a reduced lead content was officially introduced in Victoria from 1 January 1983. All petrol sold in Victoria after that date had to have not more than 0.3 grams per litre (g/L), a reduction of one-third from the previous limit of 0.45 g/L.

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) in Victoria, carries out a monitoring program of lead content in petrol at service stations. It selects and tests twelve samples from different service stations each month. At present all samples have had a lead content under 0.3 g/L.

The EPA expects annual lead emissions to reduce from 1200 tonnes per annum to 800 tonnes per annum. However they will not have accurate figures on the effect on lead emissions until 1984.

Unleaded petrol is scheduled to be introduced in Victoria in 1985.

Source: Environment Protection Authority, Victoria.



home where neighbours found and cared for her while her parents were detained and tortured.

While in prison Khosi suffered a stroke and severe heart palpitations after repeated beatings by the police. She was put in hospital under another name and nursing staff were led to believe she was suffering from a 'highly infectious disease'. With even her own identity denied to her, she remained totally cut off from the outside world, family and friends during her detention.

Source: *Anti-Apartheid News*, January-February 1983.

## Maori's land denied

New Zealand's Prime Minister Robert Muldoon has rejected the findings of the Waitangi Maori Tribunal, a government-sponsored tribunal examining Maori land, forest and fishing rights.

The tribunal had a board made up largely of Pakeha (whites) and only a few Maoris in government positions. It found the Maori to be justified in their claim of crimes committed against them and that the Treaty of Waitangi, which guarantees them their traditional land rights, has been grossly violated.

The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840 between Maori leaders and British representatives, specifies that in return for the right of the British Crown to purchase Maori land, Maori people are guaranteed their traditional land rights.

The Muldoon decision to disregard the tribunal's findings further undermines the Maori struggle for independence. It eliminates any chance for the Maori to receive any form of recompense or restitution for destruction of land and fishing beds (past and ongoing) and threatens the Maori with cultural extinction.

One of the Maori tribes threatened by Muldoon's decision is Te Ati Awa, a people living on the West coast of the North Island. The Te Ati

Awa people's traditional fishing ground is the harbour in an area now known as New Plymouth. The damage to sea and fishing beds by effluent from industrial plants and oil rigs is so extensive, the government has placed signs along the coast warning people not to eat fish caught in the area.

The Te Ati Awa people have exhausted every form of legal and political intervention in order to stop this environmental and cultural disregard by the Muldoon government.

The government has also been investigating the potential of the harbour housing nuclear submarines and submarines carrying nuclear warheads. The Te Ati Awa people have now enlisted the aid of Nuclear Physicists to support the Maori people in preserving the area as fishing grounds.

The Waitangi Action Committee, a group working on Maori land rights, is asking for messages of support and protest from groups around the world.

Action: Send messages of support to The Waitangi Action Committee, 20 Hume St, Waitara, Aotearoa, New Zealand. Messages of protest should be sent to Prime Minister Robert Muldoon, Parliament Building, Wellington, Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Source: World Information Service on Energy, 21 April 1983.

## Gum trees in India

Thousands of farmers in Karnataka state, southern India, have switched from growing traditional staple foods to growing eucalyptus trees. Poor agricultural labourers are hard hit as food and jobs become scarce while big farmers benefit from the high price which eucalyptus fetches.

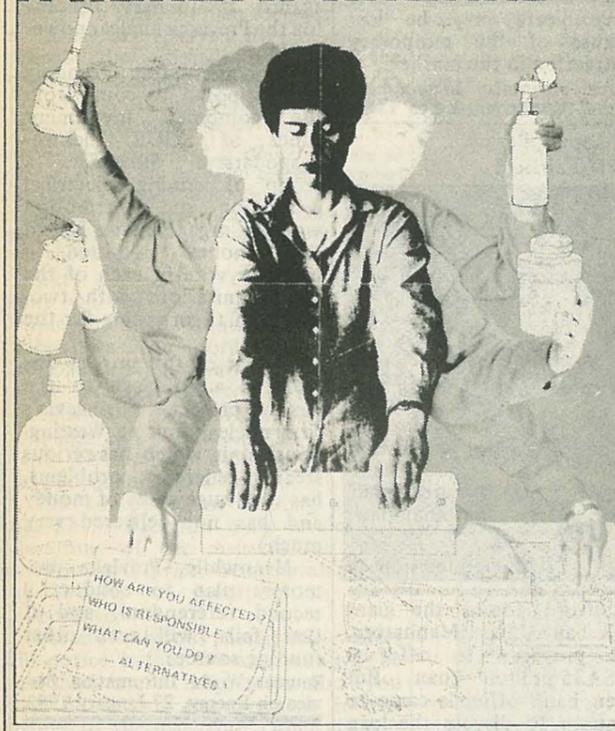
The government promotes this scheme as a benefit to the rural community, providing villagers with fuelwood and timber. However, in many cases the trees planted are commercial eucalyptus rather than locally useful species. Villagers prefer 'honge', a hardwood, because it can be put to a number of

uses: the timber can be made into cartwheels and posts; the bark fibre is made into string and rope; the leaves make a protein-rich fodder; and the oil from seeds is used as a lubricant and for lighting.

The consumers of bulk eucalyptus are two paper mills and a rayon factory. The mills pay 300 rupees (\$A32) for a tonne of eucalyptus while honge fetches only 150 rupees (\$A16) a tonne. Agents of the mills offer farmers advances for the six to eight years before the eucalyptus trees can be harvested.

Source: *Earthscan Bulletin*, United Nations Environment Program, February 1983.

## MAKING ART - A HEALTH HAZARD ?



ARTWORKERS UNION

## RESCUE the RAINFORESTS

### Rainforest update

The 'Forestry Revocation and National Parks Reservation Bill' was presented, read, and adopted by both houses of the NSW parliament, on 30 March 1983.

The Bill was ready for presentation to the governor the following day, some five months after it was originally announced by the NSW Rainforest Cabinet Committee. The governor assented to the Bill on 22 April, and the assent was gazetted on 13 May.

Only four of the originally proposed areas (see *Chain Reaction* 31) have as yet been gazetted. They are: the Black Scrub additions to the

New England National Park, the Border Ranges National Park, the bulk of the Washpool National Park, and the Nightcap National Park.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service is now responsible for the caretaking of these parks. The northern section of the Washpool area is subject to some complex investigations by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the Forestry Commission of NSW. They must determine appropriate topographical boundaries and requirements for future roading as well as fire protection aspects. These investigations will take some time to complete.

## Art hazards

Though the poisoning hazard for artists using lead paint has been minimized, many of the materials now used in artwork are extremely hazardous, for example, new plastic products, lacquers, solvents, aerosol sprays and benzene-based dyes.

New materials are constantly appearing on the market with inadequate testing for either short or long-term hazards. Labelling is inadequate and manufacturers are not obliged to list all contents. This means that even when dangers are associated with certain materials it is difficult to find out if you are using them.

The working conditions of many artworkers may intensify the hazards involved in the use of their materials.

Working and living in the same space increases the risk of inhalation and ingestion of dangerous substances.

The Artworkers Union in New South Wales has formed a working group to investigate the health hazards and safety risks associated with working conditions in all forms of production of the visual and related arts. At present the group is involved in preliminary research to compile and collate existing material on health and safety in the arts.

Action: Anyone interested in working on the Artworkers Union (NSW) research project should contact: Health and Safety Group, PO Box A509, Sydney South, NSW 2000.

Source: *Making Art - A Health Hazard?*, published by the Artworkers Union Health and Safety Group.

## Breast milk

The federal minister for Science and Technology, Barry Jones, recently received evidence that pesticides sprayed in houses to control termites and other pests have been found in breast milk. The pesticides are closely related to DDT and have been banned from use on food crops. They are being used in homes, often by untrained operators, without any safety checks.

The Australian Consumers Association (ACA) said the situation is 'enormously

dangerous' for both consumers and unskilled pest contractors who are unaware of the toxicity of the chemicals being used. According to the ACA, in 1982 a Perth woman's breast milk was found to contain ten times the acceptable level of pesticide after her house had been sprayed.

Contamination of breast milk by toxic chemicals was dealt with in detail in 'Breast milk, a source of more than nutrition', a feature in *Chain Reaction* Autumn 1983, Number 31.

Source: *Tribune* 13 April 1983.



MARY LEUNG

## Green law group

The Queensland Environmental Law Association Inc held its inaugural meeting on 2 March 1983. The association has been formed 'to encourage the development of a balanced environment through education and legislative initiative'.

The president, David Walker, stated that for the present the association would not take up specific environmental causes as this role was more in the scope of conservation groups and citizens' protest organisations. Instead the association will advise such groups on the courses of action available to them.

Contact: Write to the Queensland Environmental Law Association, GPO Box 2246, Brisbane, Qld 4001.

Source: *Queensland Conservation Council Newsletter*, March 1983.

## Atom Express

Four editors of West Germany's biggest anti-nuclear magazine *Atom Express* have been charged with promoting a terrorist organisation. If convicted under an anti-terrorist law the four could be sentenced to between six months and five years imprisonment.

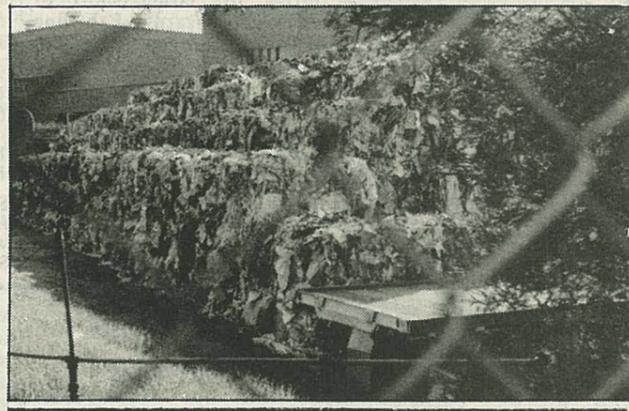
On 9 March 1983, police raided the editorial and printing offices of *Atom Express* confiscating the remaining copies of the January 1983 edition. In this edition an anonymous letter from an organization called 'Revolutionary Cells' was published as part of a discussion.

The letter referred to the Kalkar reactor as an expression of imperialistic tendencies in West Germany. In addition, the letter's authors acknowledged responsibility for attacks on Interatom and the Organisation for Reactor Safety in Cologne and also on an electricity pylon leading to the Kalkar reactor.

## Paper slump

Demand for paper products has fallen by over 30% since August 1982 as a result of the downturn in the Australian economy, according to the Environment Strategy Branch, Department of Home Affairs and Environment.

Demand for wastepaper has consequently slumped, with Australian mills accumulating considerable stockpiles.



## Vanuatu affaire

The government of Vanuatu has acted against destabilisation activities by right-wing forces in Vanuatu. It deported Christine Coombe, the editor of the *Voice of Vanuatu* which was in fact the voice of French, Australian and other plantation owners and business people who see the governing Vanuaaku Pati as a threat to their interests.

The *Voice* spearheaded the destabilisation campaign which consisted of a 'loans affair' similar to the media campaign which was important to the dismissal of the Whitlam Labor government in 1975.

Brian Jefford, a New Zealander, approached Prime Minister Walter Lini at the time of independence offering to investigate possible loans for Vanuatu. Lini gave Jefford a letter authorising him to investigate loan possibilities but without taking financial responsibilities for Jefford's costs.

Lini and the government later uncovered allegations that Jefford had a criminal record and was linked with Western intelligence sources.

As companies curtail waste-paper collections, wastepaper collectors are experiencing serious consequences.

There is particular concern that community attitudes and enterprises fostered over many years may be lost because of the temporary contraction in the market.

Source: *Australian Environment Council Newsletter*, March 1983.

The paper piles up. APM Fairfield.

Jefford found the giant USA bank Chase Manhattan, was prepared to offer a \$USA35 million loan. But when bank officials came to Vanuatu to discuss the loan Lini and his government sent them and Jefford packing.

Some observers believe that the Reagan administration is angered by Vanuatu's determined non-aligned position.

Vanuatu is playing a major role in the struggle for a nuclear-free and independent South Pacific. Early in April the parliament unanimously declared the country a nuclear-free state. As the USA refuses to confirm or deny whether its warships or planes are nuclear-armed they are therefore banned from Vanuatu.

Radio Australia gave a very anti-Vanuaaku Pati coverage of the destabilisation. Radio Australia is widely listened to in Vanuatu. While it is formally an independent body Australian intelligence agencies have strong influence on its line.

Action: Write to Radio Australia calling for a restoration of balance in its reports on Vanuatu. Address your letter to Head of Radio Australia, Cnr Highbury Rd and Springvale Rd, Burwood, Vic 3125.

Source: *Tribune*, 27 April 1983.

## Workers veto funds

Energy workers in Yugoslavia have voted in a referendum against preliminary funding for the Prevlaka nuclear power station.

Pre-construction funding was supposed to come from the combined investment funds of SOUR Elektro-gospodarstva Slovenije; a group of mining, electrical generation and distribution workers' organisations. Use of this money required a majority vote in each of the 96 organisations with two-thirds of them voting for the project.

Defeat of this project was seen as a backlash to the Krsko project, Yugoslavia's first nuclear unit (a Westinghouse unit which has serious steam generator problems, has cost huge sums of money and has not delivered very much).

Meanwhile, Prevlaka promoters plan to conduct a second referendum, and if that fails, will seek other funding sources.

Source: *World Information Service on Energy*, 27 January 1983.

## VDU policy

The executive of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) has adopted a comprehensive health and safety policy on screen-based equipment (SBE). The policy is concerned with protecting workers doing repetitive or continuous work on equipment using electronic or optical display of information.

The ACTU does not oppose the introduction of SBE, however, they acknowledge that the introduction of such equipment rarely improves people's working conditions, and can make conditions considerably worse. The policy notes the risks to health posed by such equipment, and specifies standards and working procedures which would minimise these risks both in the short and long term.

Affiliates of the ACTU are now actively seeking to negotiate agreements based on this policy with employers.

Source: *Health and Safety Bulletin*, March 1983.

## New initiatives

Early this year, 1983, *Chain Reaction* received a grant of \$50 000 from the Victorian government under their Employment Initiatives Program. This scheme is part of the state government's job creation plan for people who had been unemployed for at least six months, the rationale being that the long-term unemployed find it harder to find jobs. As the Ministry for Employment and Training put it:

The primary objectives of the scheme are to give an immediate boost to the employment prospects of the more disadvantaged unemployed and to enhance their future employability through useful work experience and training.

Sixty per cent of *Chain Reaction's* grant will be used to employ three people for eight months of this year, to be trained in coordinating the production, distribution and administration of the magazine. The rest of the money is allocated to developing a promotional campaign and purchasing capital equipment. We now have our own typewriter and photocopier in the office.

The conditions of funding specify that *Chain Reaction* is to develop the operations of the magazine as a co-operative enterprise. We are presently in the process of incorporation as a cooperative.

The most obvious change that readers will notice is that the magazine will be published more frequently; also you may notice an improvement in the quality of the magazine. Other changes you probably won't notice are things like the more time being spent on preparing financial statements and other administrative reports for the ministry.

The funding also raises some major questions for the collective. Questions such as, how will the collective operate now it consists of both paid staff and unpaid volunteers? While volunteer labour remains essential to keep the magazine running, paid staff will obviously have the power of knowledge from being in the office five days a week. The need to consciously share information amongst the collective becomes vital.

Pauline Kennedy  
Keith Redgen

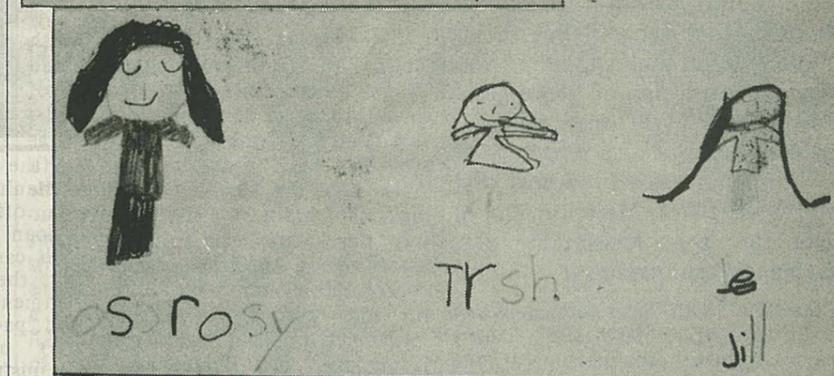
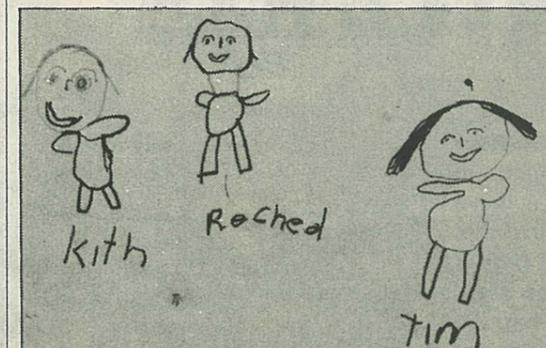
## More deadlines

From this edition we will be publishing *Chain Reaction* every two months. This change in frequency to six magazines a year was agreed to by a national poll of Friends of the Earth groups in June 1982 but financial and other constraints have prevented us from implementing this decision until now.

To make this move a success we require your continuing and increased support. We will need your ideas and comments on the magazine, your time and energy in helping us edit, produce, distribute and manage the magazine,

and of course donations.

We will also need more of your written contributions - letters, news items, reviews and articles. The next edition will be published in late July. If possible we would like to receive feature articles by 10 June 1983. The following edition comes out in late September; deadline for articles and reviews for this edition is 12 August 1983.



## Child care available

Free child care is now available for all *Chain Reaction* workers and collective members. This should enable everybody who would like to get involved with *Chain Reaction*, but can't now because of their responsibility for children, to join the collective and come to our meetings.

When we decided to provide child care facilities for collective members there were a number of things we thought made it important. It will be valuable and worthwhile for the collective if just a few, or even one new person can become a part of the collective because child care is available. New people, new ideas and new spirit are always needed by progressive organisations and publications like ours.

These groups also have a tendency to become male-dominated and patriarchal in structure. At *Chain Reaction* we do our best to prevent this from happening, but the only way we can be sure of succeeding is if we have as many women as possible in the collective. When we did not provide

child care many women who might have liked to get involved simply couldn't.

Lastly, but perhaps most important of all, we believe that women (or men) who have a responsibility for children have the right to free child care. One of the best and most obvious ways is for it to be provided by the employer or the group that the women work with or participate in. *Chain Reaction*, and all other groups, have a responsibility to provide child care for their members. We would like everybody who's interested in *Chain Reaction* to be able to come to our meetings and do whatever work they're interested in. And we especially want more women to contribute to the magazine's running and decision making. It is up to us to ensure that they are able to.

So if you have a child and want to work with us, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Drop in or give us a ring so that we can organise the child care arrangements, and we'll see you at the next meeting.

# Land rights and wrongs

Aborigines throughout Australia continue the struggle to achieve official recognition of their rights to land. Recent legislation passed by the New South Wales state parliament has attracted a barrage of criticism from Aboriginal groups. Most anger has been directed at an Act validating the illegal revocations of Aboriginal reserve land early this century. However much is also wrong with the much-heralded Aboriginal Land Rights Act. Meredith Wilkie looks at the legislation and Aboriginal responses to it.

In the New South Wales parliament late on the night of 29 March 1983, Maurie Keane, formerly chairperson of the Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly upon Aborigines which reported on land rights in August 1980, heralded the state government's Aboriginal Land Rights Bill as 'historic and unique measures'.<sup>1</sup> Outside parliament, a large contingent of Aborigines from all over the state protested that this bill, and another bill retrospectively validating the illegal revocations of at least 10 000 hectares of Aboriginal reserve land since the turn of the century, were a sell-out.

Maurie Keane, and three other former members of the select committee, in a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* earlier in March, had condemned the Aboriginal opposition to the land rights bill and characterised it as being motivated by the concern of a few for the security of their power base.<sup>2</sup> Other interested persons in the government echoed this theme and Pat O'Shane, secretary of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, was reported as

*Meredith Wilkie works with the Aboriginal Law Research Unit of the University of New South Wales.*

asserting that the bill 'would appeal to the majority of the state's Aborigines'.<sup>3</sup> The fact is that Aborigines in New South Wales are apprehensive about the land rights Act for one reason or another. This article is an attempt to set out some of those reasons.

## Consultation

Of course, Aborigines in New South Wales have been lobbying state and federal governments for recognition of their land rights since the arrival of the first fleet. The land rights movement as such has been active in New South Wales since the 1920s. At all times the movement has been essentially a voluntary one. Never has any government recognised an Aboriginal organisation or confederation of such organisations for the purpose of negotiating a settlement of land rights claims. All Aboriginal lobby groups have had to work without government recognition or funding.

The NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs was established in November 1981, and in December 1982 published a Green Paper on Aboriginal land rights which contained draft legislation. In that year there had been no consultation on land rights by the ministry. Important recommendations of the select committee, such as the right to claim private land, the establishment of a Land Claims Tribunal, and full Aboriginal ownership of minerals, were rejected by ministry (and minister's) staff on their own initiative, for their own reasons, and without consultation.

The Green Paper appeared just before Christmas 1982. However, only 200 copies were available at that time and the 10 000 printed copies ordered did not reach the ministry until 7 February 1983. These were mailed to Aborigines and other interested persons over the next week or so.

That period, December to March, was marked by a number of land rights meetings initiated on an ad hoc basis by



ELAINE PELOT KITCHENER

Aboriginal organisations. Most were attended by the minister and/or officers of the ministry. No-one could argue that these meetings would satisfy the select committee's call for adequately funded and facilitated local, regional and state conferences. A programme of consultation was not implemented. No funding was made available for the research into and determination of policy positions and all the complex preparatory consultation and discussion which that involves.

The Wiradjurai Aboriginal Land Council, among others, called on the government early in 1983 to delay the introduction of the proposed legislation into state parliament for a period so that Aborigines would have a chance to study it and make submissions.

Aboriginal people had less than two months to read, understand, critique and lobby upon a bill which touches the one most important issue for them as a distinct culture determined to survive as such.

The minister, Frank Walker, sacrificed the consultative process to make sure he



ELAINE PELOT KITCHENER

got the bill passed before an already unsympathetic government became positively hostile as the recession deepened. He decided, in the best interests of Aborigines who had decided otherwise, that early passage should be secured.

## Revocation

In 1979 the NSW solicitor-general advised the state government that many Aboriginal reserves had been illegally revoked between about 1909 and 1969. Most of them had been alienated to white interests. In 1982 the NSW Aboriginal Legal Service began researching the legality of revocations and commenced an action in the Supreme Court challenging them.

In November 1982 the government announced that legislation would be introduced to retrospectively validate or legalise the revocations.<sup>4</sup> This legislation would affirm the new ownership by white interests or, in a few cases, the crown. The Crown Lands (Validation of Revocations) Act, 1983, was passed in

tandem with the Aboriginal Land Rights Act at the end of March.

The legislation pre-empted the Aboriginal Legal Service action in the Supreme Court. The shadow minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Tim Moore, was reported as stating that this legislation was a contravention of civil rights because it would put a stop to the Supreme Court action.

Every citizen of NSW was entitled to a fair hearing in a court of law and the government's bill would deny Aborigines this right.<sup>5</sup>

The legislation effectively answered existing Aboriginal claims for the return of all former reserves, on the basis of long association and historical attachment, in the negative. The irony of this legislation's introduction in tandem with the land rights Act is that the former bill finally deprived Aborigines of at least 10 000 hectares, while the latter offered the opportunity to claim only a few unwanted scraps of crown land in addition to the 4600 hectares of former reserve land still owned by the

Land rights protest in Sydney against recent state legislation.

Aboriginal Lands Trust.

At least two former members of the select committee greeted the revocations legislation with dismay. George Petersen said it was a:

contemptible, cynical exercise of power by a dominant race that has seized the property of other people and is determined to keep that property.<sup>6</sup>

Millie Butt, assistant secretary (community liaison) at the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, also spoke out strongly against the revocations legislation. She was promptly suspended.

Bob Bellear, chairperson of the NSW ALP Aboriginal Affairs Policy Committee asked:

where are the friends of Aboriginal Australians who will rise to defend the most dispossessed section of the Australian population from this retrospective theft of Aboriginal land?<sup>7</sup>

No compensation has been offered to Aborigines in respect of these former reserves.

## Self-determination

And what of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act itself?

As noted by the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'the legislation is a pale imitation of the robust recommendations made by the Parliamentary Select Committee'.<sup>8</sup> The NSW ALP's Aboriginal Affairs Policy Committee drew attention to the great disparity between state ALP policy on land rights and the provisions of the legislation.

The only significant advance made by the 1983 Act over the Aborigines Act, 1969-1973, which set up the Aboriginal Lands Trust, is that it commits the state government to a substantial amount of funding for land rights purposes. The Act adopted the select committee's recommendation that 7.5% of state land tax revenues should be paid into an account operated by a NSW Aboriginal Land Council for fifteen years. There are some problems with this recommendation:

- First, it is by no means certain that land tax will continue to increase annually. It could even be abolished.
- Second, in the past six or seven years land tax collections have not kept pace with inflation. If this situation continues, the total commitment by the government could be as little as \$114 million in 1982-83 prices, and not \$400 million as claimed by the government.

- Third, only half of each year's allocation could be used by the land council. The other half would have to be permanently invested. Thus, while the government may commit \$13 million per year after the first year or so, only \$6.5 million is to be available for land rights purposes.

- Finally, the administrative costs of over 100 local Aboriginal land councils, between six and nine regional land councils, and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, will be the first charges on this annual \$6.5 million allocation. It is impossible to estimate how much this could cost and much depends on decisions made by Aboriginal council members themselves, but it could amount to two-thirds of the allocation. With the remainder, the land councils will be able to purchase land on the open market and develop that land and the existing reserves.

In other respects the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, 1983 does not offer very much more than the Aborigines Act, 1969-1973:

**FREEHOLD TITLE.** The 1983 Act

grants freehold title to each of the extant former reserves to individual local Aboriginal land councils. The total area is some 4600 hectares. This is already owned by an elected Aboriginal organisation, the Aboriginal Lands Trust, which had the power to grant freehold title to local communities but had decided to negotiate 99-year leases instead.

**MINERAL RIGHTS.** The 1983 Act ensures that all Aboriginal land will include the minerals except gold, silver, coal and petroleum. All land owned by the Aboriginal Lands Trust already includes the same minerals.

**CROWN LANDS.** The 1983 Act permits Aboriginal land councils to make claims for unwanted crown lands. The government, through the Minister for Lands, can veto these claims. The Aboriginal Lands Trust has been able to request the Minister for Lands for the transfer of crown lands since 1974, and a number of these claims have been successful.

**SACRED SITES.** Neither the former Act nor the 1983 Act makes provision for the transfer of sacred sites to Aboriginal ownership and control.

**HUNTING, FISHING AND GATHERING RIGHTS.** The 1983 Act provides that Aboriginal land councils may approach land owners for permission to enter their land for the purpose of hunting, fishing and/or gathering. Of course, this legislative sanction is entirely unnecessary. Any citizen may make such an approach. Aborigines are still subject to conservation rules regarding forest reserves, protected flora and fauna, endangered species, and so on. Their traditional rights have still not been recognised.

The 1983 Act includes a provision permitting an appeal to the NSW Land and Environment Court in the event of a refusal by a land owner, who may be the National Parks and Wildlife Service for example, to permit access. The Aboriginal applicants must establish that the area was traditionally used for hunting or fishing, and that the food sought was traditionally hunted or fished for. The owner of the land also has a right to be heard, of course.

**UNDERLYING POLICY.** The policy of the Aborigines Act, 1969-1973 is assimilation; a policy condemned by Aborigines and others as tantamount to cultural genocide. The policy of the 1983 Act is claimed to be self-determination.

Yet organisational structures and modes are still imposed on Aborigines by government. They are not free to organise as they choose, and demand governmental recognition. The land councils set up by the Act are defined by government officers as to their boundaries, their constituents, their functions and powers, and their structure (which is corporate). They are accountable to the government and can be dissolved by the government.

This is not self-determination. These land councils are government impositions just as the Aboriginal Lands Trust was. The government is still very much in control of these Aboriginal organisations.

**OTHER FAULTS.** In still other ways the 1983 Act represents no advance for Aborigines. They are still not protected from the discriminatory actions of local government councils. They are still burdened by the administrative demands of the corporate structure and financial accountability. Their traditional perspective on environmental planning and protection still carries no weight.

In conclusion, let me quote from the submission on the legislation by the NSW Aboriginal Land Council (not to be confused with the council of the same name to be established by the Act):

The Aboriginal people of New South Wales are the true owners of this State. We are entitled to be compensated for the loss of this land by theft, for the loss of its use, for the loss of the natural resources. We are entitled to a secure land base on which to develop our communities in accord with our own traditions and aspirations. We are entitled to self-determination; to freedom from government control and interference in our lives and our future. We are entitled to self-government. We are entitled to our heritage: our sacred sites, our traditional foods, our sovereign status.

We demand the recognition of these rights by the government of New South Wales. We will not stop calling for land rights until these demands are met.

### References

1. NSW Legislative Assembly, *Hansard*, 29 March 1983.
2. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 March 1983, p 6.
3. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 March 1983, p 10.
4. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 November 1982, p 1.
5. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 March 1983, p 11.
6. NSW Legislative Assembly, *Hansard*, 29 March 1983.
7. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 March 1983, p 6.
8. *Sydney Morning Herald*, editorial, 31 March 1983, p 6.

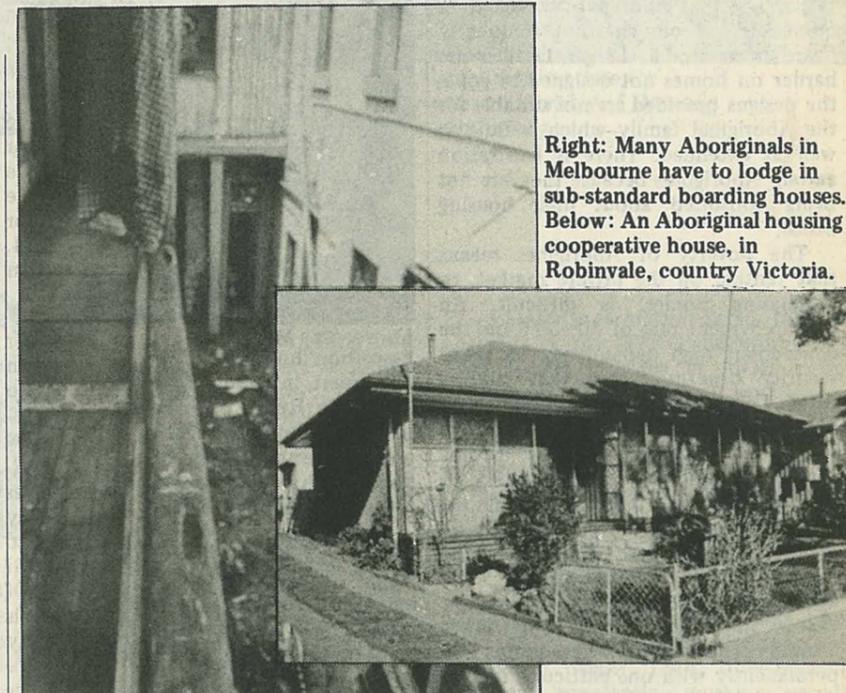
# Aboriginal housing in Victoria

To date 'development' programs for Aborigines have been designed by governments or welfare agencies with little consultation with Aboriginal people. This can be observed in housing programs which are frequently unsuited to Aboriginal needs. In Victoria, as elsewhere in Australia, Aborigines are setting up their own organisations to manage their affairs. These attempts are limited in their effectiveness, however, by lack of adequate and long-term government funding, an apparent fear of too much Aboriginal control, and a general disbelief in the ability of Aborigines to do things for themselves.

In this article, Jenny Bryant looks at the problems faced by many Victorian Aborigines in obtaining suitable housing.

Housing is one area of Aboriginal policy-making which has received considerable attention in the last few decades. A great deal of money has been spent on Aboriginal housing in the last ten years and, although the amounts fluctuate, housing still accounts for around 20% of money spent on Aboriginal development programs. However, given that in Australia approximately 1200 new families form each year and that for instance in 1980-81 750 new houses were to be built, it is obvious that by sheer numbers alone the provision of housing for Aborigines is inadequate. This does not even take into account the 15% of households without piped water, the 30% with no power, and the

*Jenny Bryant has researched the housing situation of Aborigines in Victoria at Monash University, Victoria. She currently works with the School for Social and Economic Development at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji.*



Right: Many Aborigines in Melbourne have to lodge in sub-standard boarding houses. Below: An Aboriginal housing cooperative house, in Robinvale, country Victoria.

38% without flush toilets.

Declining employment opportunities and the closure of reserves have forced people into urban centres. Increasing urbanisation highlights the problems people have in obtaining adequate housing. Discrimination by landlords is widespread and well documented. Also urban Aborigines have frequently been assumed by authorities to have assimilated into the wider society and thus to be catered for by general housing programs which in effect do not cater for them at all.

Today Aborigines live in a range of settlements, from very small outstations with fewer than ten residents, through to larger settlements of 1000 or more, in fringe camps on the edges of towns, and increasingly families and groups throughout major towns and cities. Large scale movement by Aborigines to towns is comparatively recent; it was not until the 1960s that large numbers moved into capital cities.

In south-east Australia, Aborigines make up only 1.2% of the total population, although in many country towns, such as Robinvale in Victoria, they are 10% of the population. In Victoria more than 90% of Aborigines are urban dwellers.

Approximately 20-25% of the Victorian Aboriginal population of around 15 000 is considered to be homeless, in that they must share with other families, move around frequently or live in temporary accommodation such as caravans or pickers' huts. Even so, mere access to adequate housing is not the main problem confronting the Aboriginal population of Victoria. Aborigines face a number of difficulties in obtaining and adapting to the European-style housing provided by the public and private housing sectors.

The Aboriginal extended family does not fit European notions of a small nuclear family fitting snugly into a three-bedroom house. In addition, land-

lords do not like large families as they mean increased wear and tear on property. Racial discrimination, although difficult to prove, plays a part in limiting access of Aborigines to the private rental market in particular. There is some evidence of discrimination against Aborigines in public housing in certain areas of Victoria.

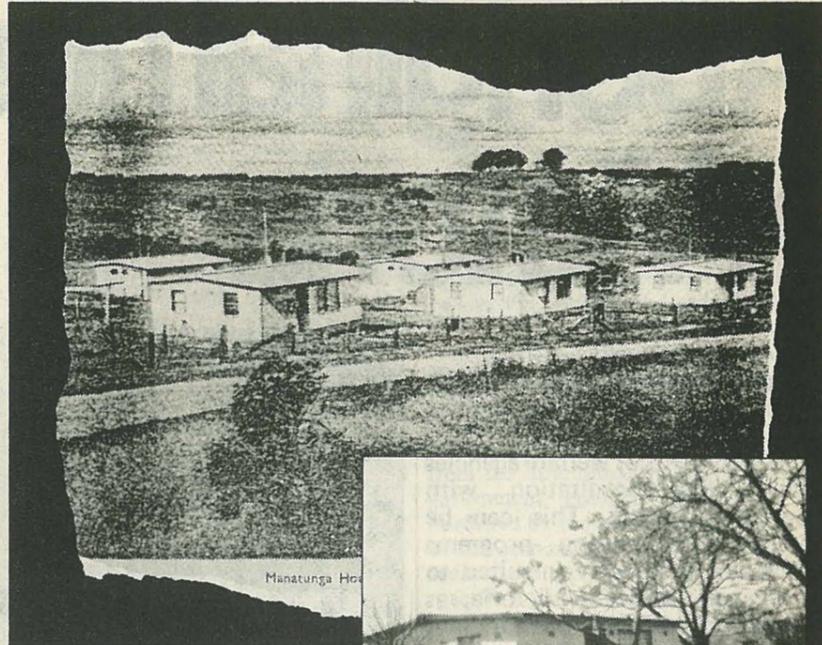
Housing provided to Aborigines by the Ministry of Housing (MOH) in Victoria is of worse quality than that provided to Europeans, and is also not maintained to the same level as white housing. Maintenance workers excuse this saying that Aborigines 'wreck their homes' — an old chestnut frequently heard in Australia. Larger families are harder on homes not designed to cope; the designs provided are not suitable for the Aboriginal family which is fluid as well as extended. There is frustration among Aborigines because they are not being consulted about their housing needs.

The poverty of Aborigines means that renting on the private market, or purchasing homes, is difficult. An unemployment rate of 30–50% and the consequent high dependency on social security benefits means that families often fall into arrears with rent payments. Even in public housing where rents are subsidised for low income earners, authorities frequently expect Aborigines to pay full market rents because they usually have additional income earners to stay (as part of the extended family network). The authorities fail to recognise that itinerant visitors and other homeless people move around constantly and often do not stay permanently with one particular family. Aboriginal households are thus penalised for the fact that they do not conform to the nuclear family pattern.

The major complaint of Aborigines is the lack of consultation about the policies that affect them. If Aborigines were involved in the decision-making process then the problems of unsuitable, poor quality housing would not be so widespread. Aboriginal input, and preferably control, would mean better communications and thus more trust between tenants and policy makers.

The history of Aboriginal housing in Robinvale, in north west Victoria, provides an excellent example of misguided government policy and of the difficulties which Aborigines face when attempting to gain opportunities equal to Europeans.

After years of being flooded out on the river bank, and living in humpies described as 'appalling rough shacks' by the Victorian Aboriginal Welfare Board (VAWB), an experimental housing



Above: The Manatunga 'transition' housing settlement, in 1960, out of Robinvale. Right: A former Manatunga house which has been modernised. When first built they had no private toilet and washing facilities.



project, called the Manatunga settlement, was implemented on behalf of the migratory Aboriginal population. The housing was not much of an improvement on the riverbank humpies. In 1960 twelve small unlined concrete huts were built out of sight of the town. They had few facilities and if anything living conditions were more crowded than before.

The houses were intended to provide a transition from the riverbank to the town but the location of the settlement slightly away from Robinvale did not give anyone a taste of town life and certainly could not have prepared people for the mostly hostile reception they were to receive. That, plus the fact that the houses were small, catering only for nuclear families, as well as the suddenness of paying rent, and budgeting for electricity and other costs, made the so-called transition almost impossible for most families. There was little in the way of counselling or assistance, despite the presence of a welfare worker.

Aboriginal households were for the most part overcrowded as many people were not eligible for housing in town. This intensified the prejudice of white settlers who regarded the crowded and

poor living conditions of Aborigines as evidence of their 'inferiority'. During the 1970s new arrivals to Robinvale continued to live on the riverbank in humpies and abandoned buses and cars as, in 1971, the Manatunga settlement had been closed as it was an embarrassment to the new Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, and the houses had been removed. The 'housing crisis' remained unsolved.

The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs was established in 1968 after the 1967 Referendum in which Australians voted overwhelmingly to allow the commonwealth to make laws affecting Aborigines. The ministry reflected the federal mood of 'integration' rather than 'assimilation' for Aborigines. Integration meant that Aborigines would merge with the wider society, but that they had a choice about doing so. It also implied that Aborigines would have some measure of control over their own affairs.

The new ministry initiated legislation which apparently gave Aborigines more power; Aboriginal staff were employed and there were efforts to end paternalism and the 'hand-out' mentality. The transition housing settlements were abolished once it was recognised that



Below: Urgent alternative accommodation on the banks of the Murray River near Robinvale.



Above: Waiting time for repairs on Ministry of Housing homes is long.

they were 'socially isolating'. Although there was still a housing shortage, people continued to move into towns and Grants were made to people wishing to purchase a house.

The aim of the ministry was the integration of Aborigines into white society, flavoured with some apparent control over their own futures. The ministry formulated policy and then encouraged people to accept it. However, the ministry had underestimated the Aboriginal people. Since the 1930s Aborigines have been actively demanding their rights in Australian society, and with the 1967 referendum they now had the power to call on the commonwealth for assistance. The victory of the Whitlam Labor government in 1972 gave Aborigines much needed support. Labor voiced a philosophy of self-determination and financed the rapidly growing self-help organisations set up by Aboriginal people to provide health, legal and housing services for Aborigines.

Housing was a major emphasis of the Whitlam government and the rush to house all Aborigines within ten years caused classic problems of inappropriate dwellings and lack of consultation. In Victoria for instance housing for Aborigines was provided by the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, in conjunction with the state Housing Commission. The allocation of homes was apparently haphazard and did not cater for Aboriginal needs. Many of the homes purchased at this time were sub-standard leading to many of the maintenance problems today.

In response to inappropriate housing a number of Aboriginal housing associations, or cooperatives were established. One, the Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-operative (MVAC), was set up in Robinvale in 1974 in order to overcome the problems of overcrowding and poor living conditions. Today the MVAC has over half a million dollars worth of assets, including fifteen houses, a block of four flats and ten hectares of land. Most Robinvale families are housed by the Victorian MOH, however, and the cooperative acts as a liaison organisation between those tenants and the MOH. The cooperative was initially funded by the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) (established 1972) and now receives annual grants from the Aboriginal Development Commission through a regional office in Melbourne. The funding is usually enough to purchase two homes a year and to cover some administration expenses but since the money arrives in quarterly installments on receipt of auditors' reports it cannot be used in advance to design and build homes more suited to Aboriginal families than the standard homes which the cooperative simply buys.

The same problem occurs with MOH homes which house most Robinvale Aborigines. There are an increasing number of people in Robinvale voluntarily leaving their MOH homes and moving into temporary accommodation. Usually these people have accumulated rental arrears but they also often have major grudges against the MOH.

Maintenance officers rarely talk with tenants or the MVAC and waiting time for repairs is long. A MOH welfare officer does call, but only on selected tenants. Notices of high arrears, threatened evictions or proposed rental increases often arrive too late (ie once arrears reach \$1000). They are rarely accompanied by verbal notification which is significant since literacy is very low among Robinvale adults.

The design of MOH homes is a continuing problem. Obviously most homes are too small, the MOH refusing to build anything larger than three-bedroom houses, apparently working on the belief that Aboriginal families will conform to the nuclear pattern and decrease in size if they are squeezed into smaller homes for long enough.

Size is not the only problem. One outside toilet and a small bathroom do not meet hygiene standards where there are thirteen people living in a house. Verandahs are not provided on any MOH homes; most homes in Robinvale face north or north-west and are unbearably hot in the afternoons. Internal paintwork is an off-white, matt finish which gets dirty and which comes away when wiped. Doors meant for internal use have been hung as outside doors, and warp quickly exposed to the weather. Sliding doors are often on bathrooms to save space, but a large number of boisterous children quickly have those doors off their runners.

Such design faults apply to most MOH homes. Where there are larger or extended families, maintenance rapidly

AWB

becomes a problem. The response of most architects is merely to consider providing tougher internal fittings so that large families would not wreck them. The idea of vandal-proof housing for Aborigines has been attempted before, both in remote areas of Australia as well as in the cities. The mentality that considers Aborigines as destroyers of housing is avoiding the issue of design of homes which suit Aboriginal life styles.

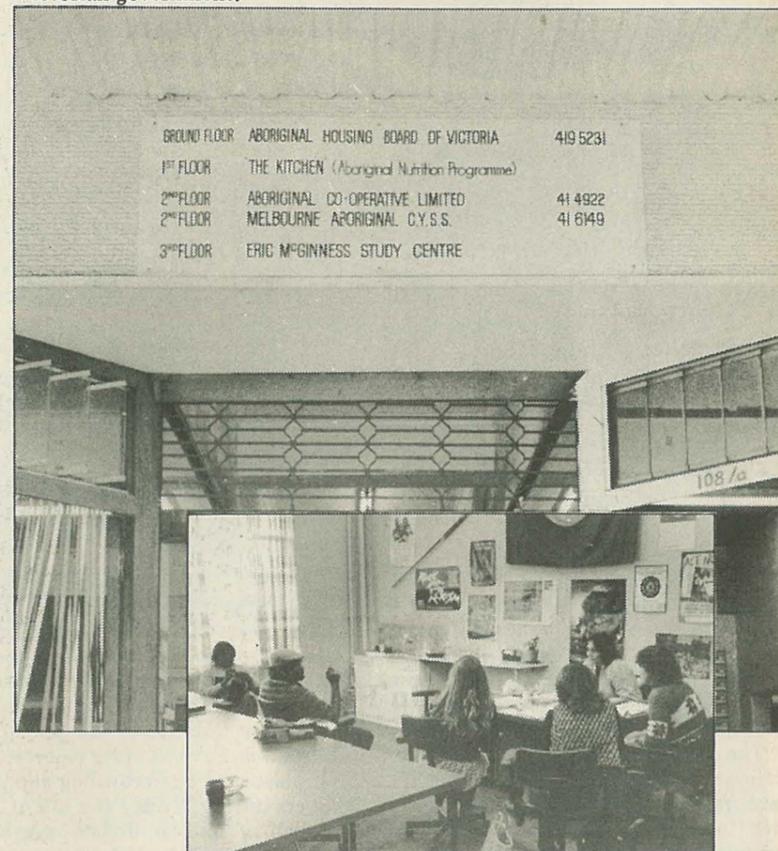
The MOH is supposed to contact Aboriginal organisations when purchasing a house in their town. In Robinvale such contact has not been made, and recently resulted in the purchase of a house which the MVAC had itself rejected. It was hoped that by communicating with people, purchase of poor quality, second-class housing for Aborigines would cease. These ideas have been floated but rarely have they been acted upon.

The response of Aborigines to obviously inappropriate housing is firstly to set up their own organisations to provide housing, but these are limited by their small quarterly budgets. For people housed by the MOH more dramatic action, such as a rent strike, sometimes occurs. Not only are houses poorly maintained but rents are rapidly rising and for people living on social security this only adds to their hardship. Community-owned houses, although few in number, have few of these problems, with lower rents and more contact with tenants. The houses which community groups are providing however, although better maintained than public housing, are also not suitable in design for Aboriginal families.

The reaction of Aborigines to this situation of poor quality, unsuitable, expensive housing, has been to establish a state-wide body which will ultimately control and manage (through local organisations) all housing presently managed by the MOH on behalf of Aborigines. The Aboriginal Housing Board, consisting of elected Aboriginal members and a MOH representative, was set up in 1981 after several years of negotiations between Aboriginal community-based organisations, the DAA and the MOH.

From early on in the negotiations however the intention of the board was lost, as the DAA and the MOH refused to hand over the houses to Aboriginal organisations as had been envisaged. The board then is advisory to the MOH, making decisions on who should have a house, where maintenance should be carried out and who should be evicted. The board does not control the annual funding which comes from the federal

Below: The Aboriginal Housing Board office in inner city Melbourne. The board has only an advisory role to the Victorian government.



GROUND FLOOR	ABORIGINAL HOUSING BOARD OF VICTORIA	419 5231
1 <sup>ST</sup> FLOOR	THE KITCHEN (Aboriginal Nutrition Programme)	
2 <sup>ND</sup> FLOOR	ABORIGINAL CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED	41 4922
2 <sup>ND</sup> FLOOR	MELBOURNE ABORIGINAL C.Y.S.S.	41 6149
3 <sup>RD</sup> FLOOR	ERIC M'GINNESS STUDY CENTRE	

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government for the purchase of Aboriginal homes. Most MOH staff frequently do not consult with board members about the purchase of a home or even an impending eviction, thus ensuring that the board is losing credibility with the Aboriginal people.

The situation is similar in other policy areas. While the new Victorian Labor government's proposal to establish an Aboriginal Authority is a tremendous advance on any previous Aboriginal policy, it has still been devised by whites on behalf of Aboriginal people with little consultation.

Another example of the lack of Aboriginal control is in the Aboriginal Development Commission in Canberra, with an annual budget of approximately \$14 million and accumulated assets of \$60 million from earlier administrations. When its chairperson, Mr Charlie Perkins, speaks out against oppression, he is gagged and threatened with dismissal.

In housing, what Aborigines in Victoria and elsewhere want is to own and control their own housing programs, but most of all they wish to determine their own priorities. To do this they will need the return of alienated land, to

provide not only a spiritual but also an economic base, and initially some form of monetary compensation. With that money it is intended to establish programs which cater more specifically for the needs of the Aboriginal people. Housing may be considered to be just one of those needs and not the instrument of 'development' as has been the case to date.

In calling for self management Aborigines are demanding control of resources, the return of the land of which they were dispossessed, and substantial political and economic power. They do not want to merely help themselves from the crumbs available after everyone else has had their share. Unfortunately, the official definition of self-determination and self-management seems to not include the actual control of resources, as espoused by the indigenous peoples of Canada, New Zealand, Scandanavia and South America, and by Australian Aborigines.

This article is an edited version of a paper presented at the 15th Pacific Science Congress in Dunedin, New Zealand, in February 1983. A list of references is available from *Chain Reaction*.

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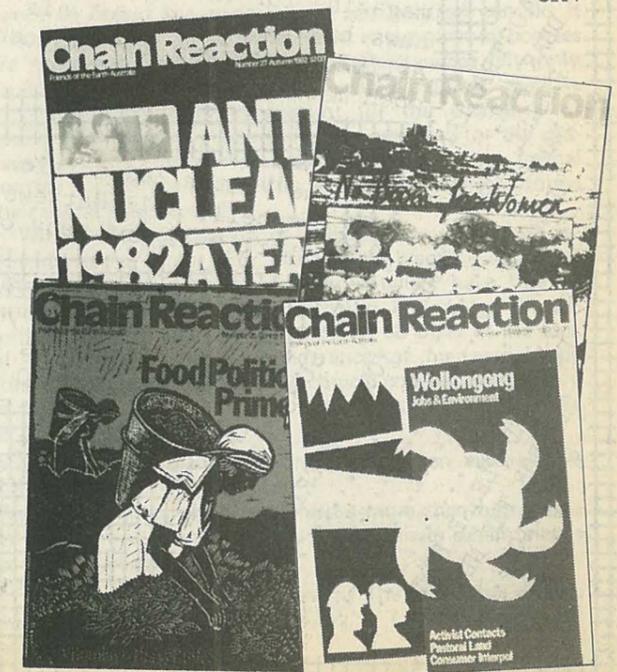
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CR7



## Pesticides on trial

Despite increasing public concern about the safety of many agricultural poisons, basic information about pesticide use in Australia is not readily available. How adequate is pesticide regulation and testing in this country? **Barbara Hutton** examines the weaknesses of the Australian system, and that of the USA, where most of our pesticide ingredients originate.

Late in June this year, 1983, a USA district court will commence hearing evidence in the Agent Orange case, the biggest lawsuit involving a pesticide in history. About 40 000 Vietnam veterans, American and Australian, may have to be compensated for damages resulting from exposure to the defoliant Agent Orange, suspected of being responsible for the appearance of various symptoms, such as bizarre emotional disorders, skin rashes, cancers, and birth defects among veterans' children. All the veterans were exposed to Agent Orange, which was sprayed heavily on jungle areas during the Vietnam war to destroy the Vietcong guerillas' cover.

Agent Orange is a combination of 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D, two chemicals used extensively in Australia to destroy woody plants, especially blackberries. These chemicals are members of the chlorinated hydrocarbon family which also includes DDT, dieldrin, aldrin, endrin, lindane, chlordane, heptachlor and other agricultural poisons. Despite repeated complaints from affected people, including women who have miscarried or given birth to children with severe defects following exposure to 2,4,5-T during pregnancy, it is still used, even in urban areas, in Australia.

DDT, aldrin, dieldrin, heptachlor and chlordane are all classified by the USA government as carcinogens. DDT is completely banned. Aldrin and dieldrin are banned except for certain non-food uses. Chlordane and heptachlor are being phased out. All these chemicals are on sale in Australia, along with the constituents of Agent Orange. Amazingly, they are not even listed as carcinogens on the commonwealth's carcinogenic substances list. In fact there are no pesticides at all mentioned on

*Barbara Hutton is an environmentalist and free-lance journalist working with Friends of the Earth (Collingwood).*

this list. This omission is symptomatic of the fragmented system of clearance and labelling which passes for pesticide control in this country.

Laboratory testing of pesticides is not carried out in Australia; the tests are performed overseas in privately run laboratories commissioned by the international pesticide manufacturers. The only possibility of investigating the safety of agricultural chemicals in Australia is a 'paper evaluation' of studies supplied by the manufacturers.

About 90% of the active ingredients used in Australian pesticides are imported from overseas, mostly from the USA. We depend for knowledge of these chemicals on the manufacturers' studies. How good are the studies on which we base our judgments on pesticide safety?

In 1976 Adrian Gross, a USA Food and Drug Administration (FDA) pathologist, conducted a random spot test on a drug safety study prepared by a firm named IBT - Industrial Biotest Laboratories Pty Ltd. IBT was a highly reputable laboratory; it conducted tests for several government departments - the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), the FDA, the National Cancer Institute, the Defence Department - as well as major companies like Ciba-Geigy, Dow, DuPont and Shell. One-third of the active ingredients used in all pesticides sold in the USA had been tested at IBT, as well as numerous drug and food additives.

What Adrian Gross found was that many of the rats used in the testing had died during the safety study without being reported: 'A great portion of the animals weren't examined at all. They were too rotten. When they died, instead of doing an autopsy, IBT just let them decompose.' The rats could have died of cancer, liver damage, nerve poisoning... anything under the sun. There had been no examination to find out.

Investigations did not end there. The FDA took the IBT to court but before the case could be heard IBT shredded hundreds of documents, including seven long-term studies on the cancer-causing potential of herbicides, cyclamates (a type of artificial sweetener), and constituents of plastics. The FDA did retrieve studies of two widely used pesticides, Sencor and Namacur, but these studies were found to be invalid. Of 900 IBT studies submitted by companies to the EPA in the mid-1970s, 80-90% were exposed as invalid, some deliberately falsified.

None of the 600 pesticides registered with the USA EPA now has adequate data to substantiate claims as to their safety. The EPA has facilities to test only 20 chemicals per year. In the meantime the suspect chemicals are still on sale. In order to remove them, the EPA must find evidence that they present an 'imminent hazard' to the environment, a difficult business when hundreds of chemicals could be held responsible for any individual cancer or birth defect. IBT, though severely hurt by the bad publicity it has received, is still operating, trying to salvage its reputation.

To return to Australia, where we have no independent testing of pesticides and the IBT fraud could never have been discovered, how are pesticides cleared for sale here?

The Australian system of deciding whether or not to register a chemical is confused and closed to the public. Applications for clearance are made to the Technical Committee on Agricultural Chemicals (TCAC), a group of senior officials from state agricultural departments, and specialists on toxicology and agricultural economics. While there are close connections and consultation between the TCAC and the pesticides industry - the Commonwealth Pesticides Coordinator, J T Snelson, was employed for 20 years by Geigy (Australia), a subsidiary of Ciba-Geigy, a major pesticide manufacturer - public interest groups have no place. Even the criteria by which the TCAC decides whether to clear a pesticide for sale remains a mystery to the public.

Because of the confusion between state and federal rights, and the unwillingness of previous federal governments to take responsibility for pesticide regulation, the actual registration of chemicals is still left up to the states. The TCAC isn't a statutory body; it operates informally and its decisions are not binding on the states.

Decisions are made on a 'consensus' basis. This means in effect that if one of the states wants a particular chemical to be cleared there is great pressure on the other states to allow it, to avoid an embarrassing confrontation which would reveal the TCAC's real lack of control.

Two states - Queensland and Victoria - have pesticide review bodies. These may have given the public some sense of security, but they have not been effective in preventing the widespread use of 2,4,5-T, a chemical strictly limited in the USA because of its dangers

Chain Reaction is an ardent supporter of grassroots action. We believe that people throughout Australia can take a strong and active part in political and social issues.

*Activist Contacts* is an example of our desire to aid the flow of information between people to aid in activism. Aiding the development of contacts between people on a range of issues will, we hope, help activists make a united and informed approach to real social change in our society.

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**Campaign Against Nuclear Energy (WA)** c/- Environment Centre of WA,  
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(09) 3215942

**Campaign Against Nuclear Power (Qld)** PO Box 238, North Quay 4000  
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**Campaign Against Nuclear Power Central Queensland** PO Box 795,  
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**Coalition for a Nuclear Free Australia**  
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**FOE Uranium Collective and Uranium Fighting Fund (Vic)** 366 Smith St,  
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**Goldfields Against Nuclear Energy**  
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(03) 6631561

**Nuclear Alert c/- Total Environment Centre**, 18 Argyle St, Sydney,  
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**Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Campaign (Vic)** PO Box 338, Fitzroy  
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**Nuclear Free Pacific Coordinating Committee (NSW)** PO Box A243,  
Sydney South 2001 (02) 2646831  
**Nuclear Free Pacific Action Group (SA)** c/- World Workshop, 155 Pirie St,  
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**Tasmanian Committee for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific**  
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**ACF (Qld)** 8 Clifton St, Petrie Terrace,  
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**Conservation Council of South East Region and Canberra** PO Box 1875,  
Canberra GPO 2601 (062) 473064  
(062) 480885

New South Wales

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PO Box 576, Broken Hill 2880  
**Environment Centre (NSW) Pty Ltd**  
399 Pitt St, Sydney 2000 (02) 2677722  
Telex: 24041

**Far South Coast Environment Group**

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**Katoomba and District Wildlife and Conservation Society c/- The Hut,**

Valley of the Waters, Wentworth  
Falls 2782 (047) 881033

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c/- Environment Centre, 399 Pitt St,  
Sydney 2000 (02) 2677722  
Telex: 24041

**Newcastle Ecology Centre** Room 6,  
Trades Hall, Union St, Newcastle 2300  
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(066) 213278

**Northern Rivers Environment Centre**  
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(066) 212057

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Sydney 2000 (02) 274714

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Alice Springs 5750 (089) 526194

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Womens House (ACT) 3 Lobelia St, O'Connor 2601 (062) 488070

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#### Womens Liberation Centre (SA)

234A Rundle St, Adelaide 5000 (08) 223 1005

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Fremantle 6160 (09) 336 2140

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##### Occupational Health and Safety Unit

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##### Occupational Safety and Health Action Group (NSW) c/- Workers

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##### Queensland Workers Health Centre

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##### Workers Health Action Group (Vic)

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##### Workers Health Centre (NSW)

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##### Workers Health Centre (Vic) PO Box 93,

Carlton South 3053 - Trades Hall, 54 Victoria St, Carlton South (03) 662 3926

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##### Animal Liberation (Qld) GPO Box 1787,

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##### Animal Liberation (SA) PO Box 114,

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##### Animal Liberation (Vic) Cnr Toorak Rd

& Somerset Rd, Hartwell 3124 (03) 295051

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##### Consumer Interpol c/- Kate Short,

Australian Consumers Association Illawarra Health Consumers

Association c/- Barbara Quintrell, 45 Morrison Av, Wombarra, NSW 2512 (042) 673747

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#### Philippines Resource Centre (Vic)

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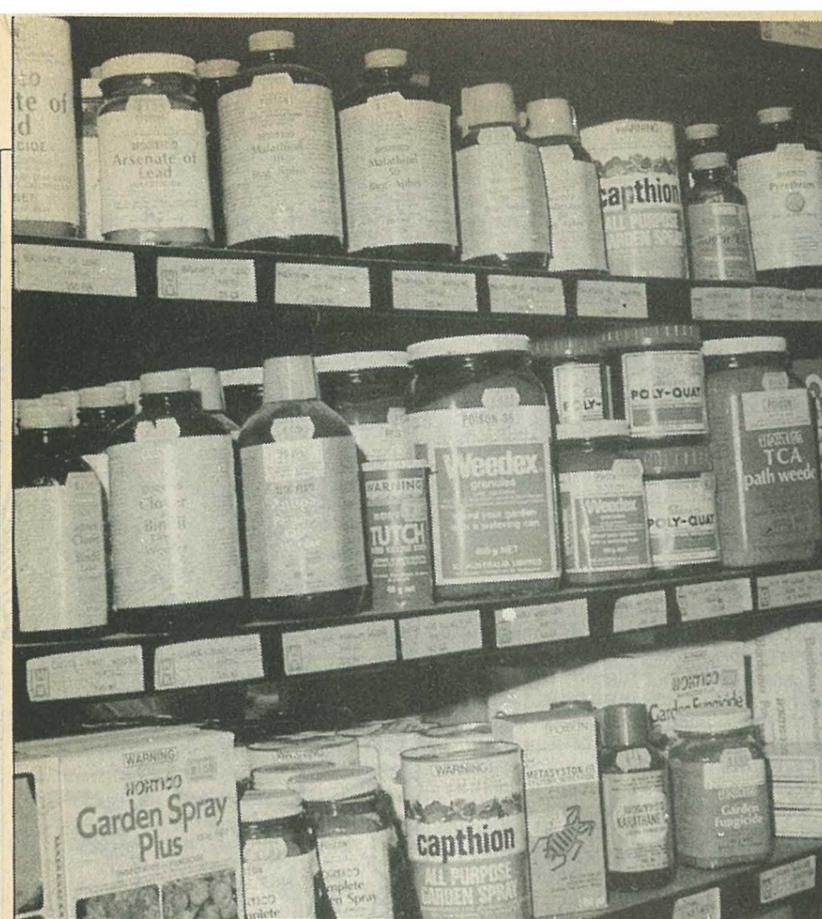
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The sale and use of pesticides, some of which are banned overseas, is not subject to adequate regulation in Australia.

to human health.

A report by the Victorian Pesticides Review Committee (recently renamed the Agricultural and Domestic Chemicals Review Committee) on 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D produced in November 1979 gives some idea of the committee's attitude. The symptoms caused by exposure to 2,4,5-T (muscular weakness, fever, gastro-intestinal disturbance and tachycardia) are described as 'not at all unusual following over-exposure to chemicals, they can for example be exactly duplicated by common salt.' Studies showing that exposure to 2,4,5-T can cause birth defects in mice are dismissed as irrelevant. The report implies that all Vietnam veterans claiming ill-effects from exposure to Agent Orange are attempting to blame 2,4,5-T for their naturally 'failing health', presumably to get a war pension. It claims that 'the most careless field application could not produce a harmful level of exposure even if pregnant women were engaged in applying the herbicide'.

The review committee appears to have seen its role as discrediting press reports on the danger of 2,4,5-T rather than setting out the arguments for and against its use. The committee has acted as an exclusive club, with minimal public input. This may change now; the new Victorian Labor government has slightly altered the charter of the committee to empower it to consult with 'any person concerned with health, safety and environmental aspects', rather

than being merely required to consult business interests as in the past. The change has yet to become apparent.

In the USA, faulty though the system may be, there is at least a central government body, the EPA, with powers to control the sale of pesticides. Chemicals may be suspended from sale if there is an imminent hazard to the environment or an endangered species. 'Substantial evidence' that a chemical is harmful is all that is required, not total proof. There are clear guidelines specifying the type of scientific evidence of the chemical's safety that must be presented before it can be registered. Applications to have a chemical registered must be published and 30 days allowed for public comment. Data must be available to the public and there are provisions for a public hearing if the registration is refused.

Although the Australian system of pesticide regulation compares unfavourably with the USA system, that is not to say that the USA system is all roses. The USA General Accounting Office, in a report entitled 'Stronger Enforcement Needed Against Misuse of Pesticides', suggested that the EPA and the states did not always properly investigate cases and sometimes took 'questionable enforcement actions'. The problem stems from a decision in 1978 making the state governments initially responsible for enforcing pesticide laws with the (federal) EPA acting only as a back-up.

This weakened its control, allowing states to make numerous exemptions for local and emergency use of dangerous chemicals.

If the USA system has dangerous weaknesses, the Australian system, with no federal laws controlling pesticide use, is even weaker. The major faults in the pesticide regulation system in this country are:

- There is no independent laboratory testing of pesticides.

- Final responsibility for releasing a chemical onto the market lies with the state agriculture or primary industry departments, rather than a central authority concerned with human health and the environment. There is a conflict of interest, as agriculture departments are involved in promoting pesticide use.

- There is no opportunity for the public to challenge a pesticide registration. (In the USA there is officially an adversarial system, pesticide manufacturers versus health or conservation bodies.)

- The control of carcinogens (cancer-causing chemicals) is totally inadequate. There is a Carcinogen Substances (Standing) Committee which examines chemicals for carcinogenicity, but not until after they are released onto the public.

- There are no federal controls on pesticide use. The Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory are not covered by state licensing laws. There is a possibility that pesticides which have failed to get a clearance in any state due to their high toxicity to humans could be imported through either territory and then sold interstate. They could certainly be used in the two territories.

With a more concerned government in Canberra, now is the time to mount a national campaign for a central authority to control the use of pesticides and other hazardous chemicals, with its own testing facilities, with provision for public interest groups to contest the introduction of new toxins. Pesticides and other poisons should not be marketed until they have a 'clean bill of health', that is, until they have been proved to be safe.

Action: The following groups can provide further information on pesticide issues:

- Council on Environmental Hazards, PO Box 238, North Quay, Brisbane, Qld 4000. Tel: (07) 370 8815.

- Food Justice Centre, 366 Smith St, Collingwood, Vic 3066. Tel: (03) 419 8700.

- Pesticide Action Group, 97 South St, Fremantle, WA 6160. Tel: (09) 335 9849.

- Toxic and Hazardous Chemicals Committee, Total Environment Centre, 18 Argyle St, Sydney, NSW 2000. Tel: (02) 27 4714.

- Conservation Councils in each state.

#### Further reading.

Pumpkins, Poisons and People, Conservation Council of Victoria, Melbourne, 1979.

DA Cole, *Some Aspects of the Regulation of Pesticides in Australia*, Master's thesis, Centre for Environmental Studies, University of Adelaide.

# The work environment

## Fighting job blackmail

Employers are increasingly using threats of job loss to split workers from the environment movement, arguing they cannot afford environment protection or occupational health regulations in the present economic crisis. To counter this 'blackmail', Paul Baker proposes that environmentalists work towards a permanent coalition with unions.

Environmental activists and unionists often seem to have trouble getting together. Cooperation, for example in black-banning uranium exports, has occurred, but such instances are the exception rather than the rule. Perhaps workers' suspicion of middle-class activists may be a partial explanation for the problem. A more significant reason for the mutual stand-off may be the failure of environmentalists to seriously approach the problems which workers face — unemployment and on-the-job health and safety conditions.

This isn't always an easy task. It wasn't until relatively recently in the Tasmanian Wilderness Society's campaign that a realistic jobs package was offered as an alternative to the Franklin dam by the environment movement. The offer came too late; there had been plenty of time for the Tasmanian government and the Hydroelectric Commission to whip up public feeling over job loss if the dam was not to go ahead. To counter such a reaction would have required a far more concerted effort in developing a closer relationship between unions and environmentalists in Tasmania.

*Paul Baker is a project officer on resources, industry and employment with the Australian Conservation Foundation.*

'Job blackmail' is a term coined by Richard Kazis and Richard Grossman, researchers with Environmentalists for Full Employment in Washington, USA, to describe the deliberate use, by industry or government, of threats to jobs in order to achieve a lessening of restrictions on industry. In their book, *Fear at work: job blackmail, labor and the environment* (Pilgrim Press, New York, 1982), they investigate ways in which job blackmail is used against the interests of workers and the public. They point out that companies are able to persuade workers to accept unhealthy or unsafe working conditions simply so they can continue to have a job. One horrific example of this was a project to cut a tunnel through a mountain to divert water for a hydroelectric scheme at Gauley Bridge, West Virginia, USA, in 1930. Workers were exposed to silica-laden dust when they were forced to work immediately after blasting, contrary to state law. By the time the work was completed, 476 workers had died and 1500 were permanently disabled.

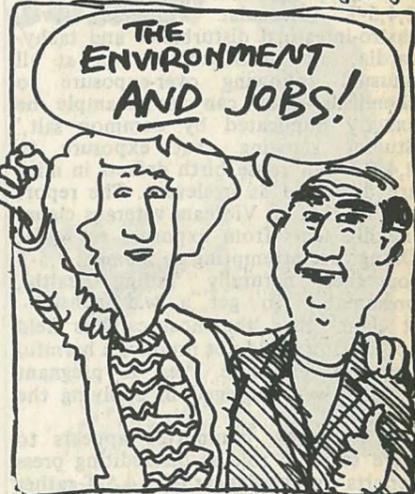
Kazis and Grossman have identified a wider problem where whole communities and governments are blackmailed, often by a powerful coalition of corporations, into soft-peddling on environmental worker health and safety regulations. The argument revolves around assertions by the company that it will have to close down its plant in that community because the required controls will cost too much and force the company to and close.\* Kazis and Grossman cite the statement of Billy Williamson, a Texas state representative, when opposing controls on an asbestos plant which was threatening the health of workers and the community:

I don't need some bunch of do-gooder nuts telling me what's good to breathe . . . I think we are all willing to have a little bit of crud in our lungs and a full stomach rather than a whole lot of clean air and nothing to eat. (*Fear at work*, p 59)

The words are a chilling echo of Lang Hancock's infamous comments about workers exposed to asbestos dust.

While job blackmail is generally less well organised in Australia than in the USA, industry lobby groups are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their use of the technique.

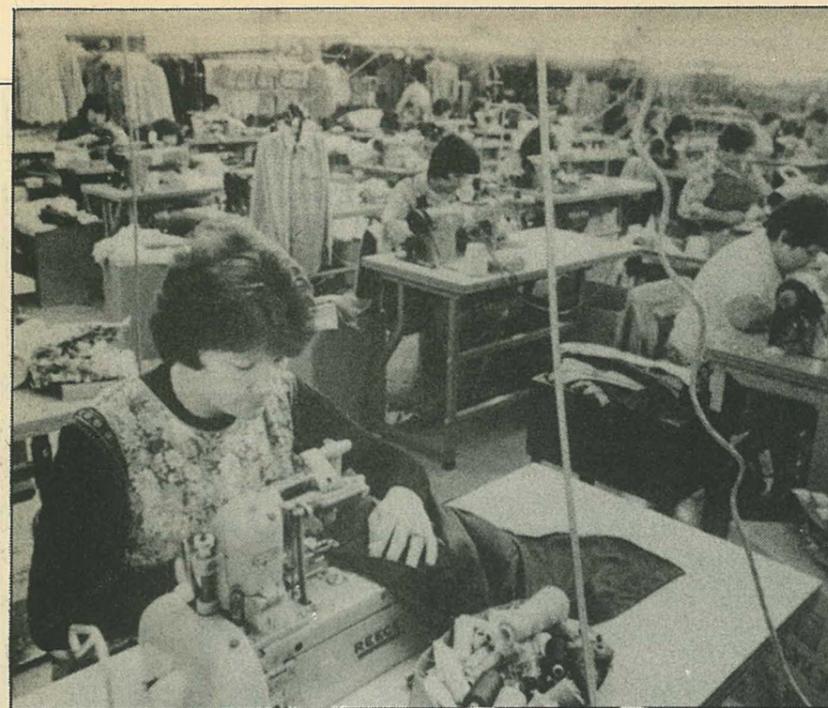
\*This was the case with Australian Iron & Steel's proposal to establish a coal waste dump near Cringila Public School in Wollongong (see *Chain Reaction* 31, Autumn 1983).



ELIZABETH HONEY

ing increasingly sophisticated in their use of the technique.

The timber lobby in Victoria has made great play of the threat to jobs of moves to create an alpine national park in Victoria. In their submission to the Land Conservation Council, the Sawmillers' Association made job loss their



CRAC

first point in a lengthy paper. They claimed that 1000 jobs would be lost, and implied that the livelihoods of a further 5000 workers who serviced the timber industry would be substantially affected. Threat of unemployment was clearly seen as a major factor in changing public opinion, especially in the media campaign which has been waged for some years on the issue. Small communities which depend on timber-milling operations for their existence are easily intimidated by the threat of job loss in that industry, and are consequently unwilling to listen to the arguments of conservationists.

What was not made clear to the public was the fact that the sawmills in the Alpine region only have around eight years of life at a maximum, due to overcutting of their timber allocations. The only real solution is to move to smaller mills which can provide more employment while using smaller, otherwise uneconomic, stands of timber, together with diversification of the region's economy into other activities, such as tourism.

The unwillingness of activists to approach unionists may also be a result of the belief that workers lack knowledge and analytical skills about matters outside the immediate ambit of their jobs. This view is inaccurate, as indicated by such significant developments as the green bans movement. In 1971 the NSW Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) placed a green ban on a development site — Kelly's Bush — in Sydney. Following that original ban, over forty others came into effect, some of them remaining to this day. Billions of dollars' worth of ill-conceived development was halted, preserving residential and other significant areas.

Members of the BLF took the time to involve themselves in issues of conservation, holding public meetings and

analysing each case put to them. While this sort of general environmental concern appeared to be a new direction for a union which had a direct interest in supplying the workforce for the new developments, there was ample precedent for this move to address issues generally thought beyond the interest or comprehension of workers on the job.

In 1973 the BLF, after consideration of medical evidence of the dangers of silicosis, successfully campaigned for an improvement of conditions leading to incidence of the disease. The BLF and its members were able not only to understand the causes and problems of the disease, but to come up with detailed methods for alleviating the problem. The membership had the direction and commitment to carry through the campaign.

What environment activists need to do is to recognise the growing understanding and commitment among workers to the issues that affect them, and work towards a permanent coalition with unions. The best place to begin the process would be to take seriously the need for strategies for job creation. In the present economic crisis, job blackmail threatens the interests of both workers and environmentalists. Every proposal to extend national parks, to halt destructive industries or to reverse pollution of the environment must carry with it clear strategies for job creation.

At the same time, activists need to recognise the interest that workers have in improving health and safety in the workplace. If activists can use their skills to assist workers with on-the-job conditions, the resulting mutual understanding and increased awareness of how workplace hazards relate to more general environmental hazards will help to create a powerful, well-informed

coalition.

Job blackmail threatens workers' conditions and environmental controls. Neither group alone has the ability to grapple with the whole problem successfully. Only a coalition, in which environmental activists seriously take up workers' concerns, can bring lasting change.

## Dockyard safety agreement

Further evidence of the growing sophistication and understanding of unionists in matters which go beyond the skills required for their jobs is a unique agreement between unions and management at Williamstown Naval Dockyards, Melbourne, which gives workers greater control over their work environment than ever before. Paul Baker reports.

In February this year (1983) the Combined Unions Shop Committee at the Williamstown Naval Dockyard negotiated a Safety and Health Agreement with the management of the dockyard, which is operated by the Department of Defence Support. The agreement, the first of its kind, sets out comprehensive safety and health measures with the stated objective of ensuring:

a significant reduction in the number of manhours lost and elimination of causes of high accident incidence by improved safety management, continual monitoring and safety education.

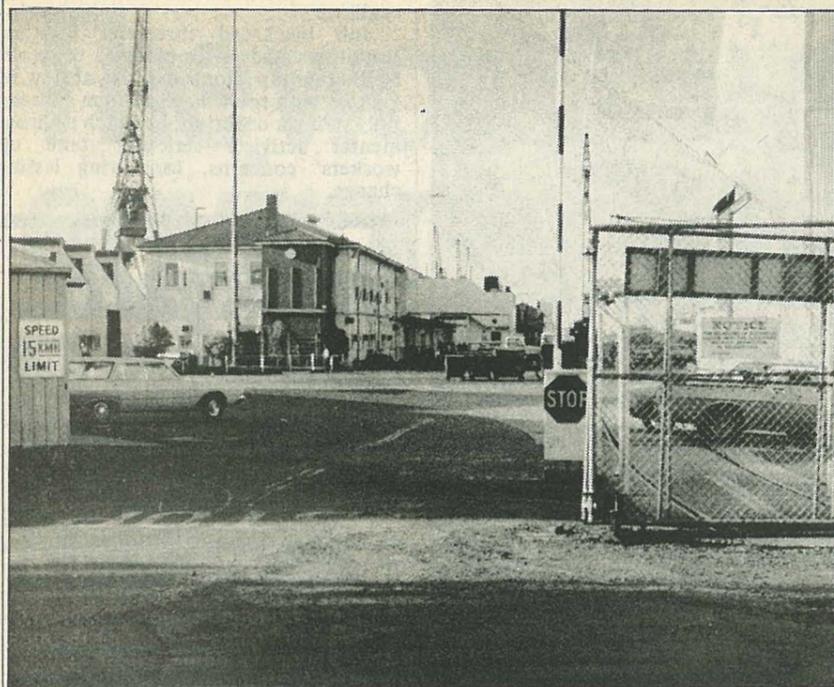
Under the agreement, a Joint Occupational Safety and Health Policy Committee has been established with equal representation from management, the unions and other employee representatives. The unions are empowered by the agreement to designate five Safety and Health representatives, who have the responsibility of inspecting work-sites and ensuring that conditions are safe.

The reluctance with which management has approached implementation of some of the measures in the agreement has angered the shop committee.

Paragraph 4(d) of the agreement states in part:

No employee shall be required to work under dangerous or hazardous conditions. In such circumstances all work shall cease on any such operation until such time as corrective action is taken.

Recently workers in the boiler room ceased work because they believed that



KEV WILSON

Williamstown Naval Dockyards.

new lagging around pipes in the boiler room was contaminated by asbestos. Management repeated assurances from the manufacturer that the lagging was 'asbestos free' and that the powder visible on the lagging was silicon. All except four men returned to the job. Those four who remained off the job had their pay docked accordingly. Since then, a laboratory report has confirmed the presence of asbestos in the lagging, possibly as the result of contamination on the production line, where asbestos lagging is also manufactured. The four men have still not been paid for the time lost.

When I spoke to representatives of the shop committee, they were angry about the delay which occurs between the suspicion of a dangerous work condition and moving the workers off the job. The representatives — Jim Bethell, John Alcaraz and Barry Corbett — explained that the committee's position was that workers should be moved off a job at the first suspicion that a dangerous situation exists, and redeployed elsewhere in the yard with no loss of pay.

Management, however, takes a different approach. Supervisors on the job appear to be obsessed with keeping work to schedule and resist suggestions that work should cease on mere suspicion of dangerous conditions. The policy from management's point of view is that a situation has to be proven dangerous before work is discontinued. In the case of the asbestos-contaminated lagging, this meant that some ten days elapsed before the laboratory report confirmed the presence of asbestos. The dockyard has no on-site facilities for

such testing.

While it is not the only issue of concern, workers at the dockyard have good reason to be worried by the possibility of asbestos in their work environment. Before asbestos and the disease contracted from exposure to it — asbestosis — made headlines, asbestos dust was a common feature of working in the dockyard. Current procedures to avoid inhalation of the dust involve a complex sequence of donning safety equipment, vacuuming the dust and sealing it in bags. The process ends with 'decontamination of the workers' clothing. Prior to this, no such precautions were taken. Asbestos lagging to be removed from pipes in ships was simply hammered off. The asbestos dust floated around freely, 'like a blizzard' according to Barry Corbett.

Cases of asbestosis among the older workers are not uncommon, but the absence of any monitoring or register of those who might have been exposed to asbestos makes it impossible to estimate the numbers affected. One young worker in the fitting shop who has spent his working life at the dockyard has asbestosis.

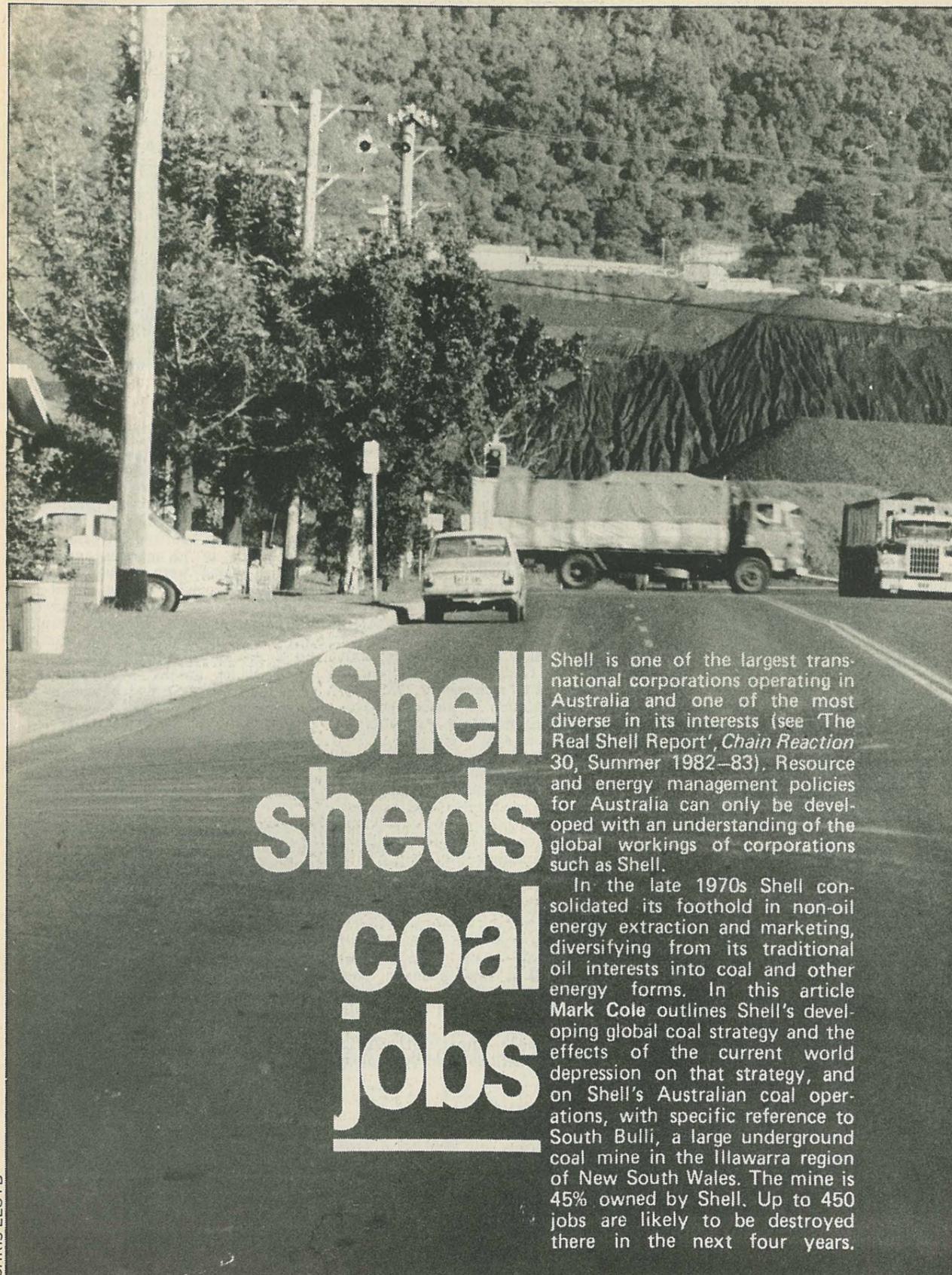
Management appears to have been surprised by the well-informed and vigilant response of unions to health and safety problems. The shop committee is currently advising management that extremely noisy jobs — needlegunning, caulking and rivetting — should be done in 'silent hours', that is, outside normal work times, to cut down the exposure of workers to noise. This procedure has been common practice

in the past. However, the ever-present pressure to complete work quickly has led supervisors to insist that these jobs be done during normal working hours. Their response to the unions' suggestions is that contracts will be lost unless the dockyard can be seen to operate efficiently. Inevitably, the safety and health of the workers is put on the line in the rush to complete the job. Jim Bethell conceded that the upper levels of management had so far resisted moves to do some of these extremely noisy jobs during normal hours, but he pointed out that the delay between events on the job and a response from distant management worked against proper policing of conditions.

Each side in the disputes has a different approach. For example, on the problem of excessive noise the response of management is to offer increased ear protection against noise; the shop committee says that this is not good enough and that everything possible should be done to decrease the levels of noise at the source, since ear protectors are not necessarily effective at all noise frequencies and under all conditions.

Increasingly, union members are becoming better informed and more aware of hazards in the workplace. Several delegates of the shop committee have undergone health and safety courses organised by the ACTU-VTHC Occupational Health and Safety Unit, under the direction of Dr John Mathews. But management does not adjust well to initiatives and suggestions coming from the unions. Recently safety and health delegates at the dockyard became suspicious about lagged piping taken from a dry-docked ship. They found that the pipes had been taken to the 'nugget factory' — the school for apprentices. Further investigation by the shop committee revealed badly deteriorated lagging around pipes in the factory. The management moved the apprentices out and closed the factory, but little was done about cleaning up the factory until proposals came from the committee. Typically, these were not acknowledged, but were quietly adopted by management some time later. Jim Bethell points out that those who now work in the dockyard began their working lives exposed to asbestos as apprentices. If the committee had not investigated the situation, apprentices would still be working in an asbestos-contaminated environment.

While the shop committee members are pleased about the adoption of the Safety and Health Agreement after a year of negotiations and joint working parties, they point out that it is only an agreement on paper and will be worthless unless policed by workers and their representatives. At the Williamstown dockyard, workers finally have a document enabling them to take control of their work environment far more than in the past. Workers in other industries are not so fortunate.



CHRIS LLOYD

# Shell sheds coal jobs

Shell is one of the largest transnational corporations operating in Australia and one of the most diverse in its interests (see 'The Real Shell Report', *Chain Reaction* 30, Summer 1982-83). Resource and energy management policies for Australia can only be developed with an understanding of the global workings of corporations such as Shell.

In the late 1970s Shell consolidated its foothold in non-oil energy extraction and marketing, diversifying from its traditional oil interests into coal and other energy forms. In this article Mark Cole outlines Shell's developing global coal strategy and the effects of the current world depression on that strategy, and on Shell's Australian coal operations, with specific reference to South Bulli, a large underground coal mine in the Illawarra region of New South Wales. The mine is 45% owned by Shell. Up to 450 jobs are likely to be destroyed there in the next four years.

Shell Australia's new slick television image — as corporate saviour to a faltering and failed economy, 'setting a steady course', 'getting on with the job', and 'investing \$1 million a day' in projects throughout Australia — is in stark contrast to recent events at the South Bulli colliery 12 km north of Wollongong. Shell, with its 45% share, is the dominant partner in the consortium, Bellambi Coal Associates Joint Venture, that owns the mine. Since the beginning of 1980 Shell's 'steady course' has meant a steady course of job destruction. Between 1980 and 1982 almost 100 jobs were lost at the mine by a process of natural attrition — as workers left or retired they were not replaced.

In April 1983 the Bellambi Coal Company (which manages the mine on behalf of the Shell joint venture and is fully owned by it) announced a plan for the reduction of a further 200 jobs at South Bulli before December 1984. This latest round of job reductions will be in the form of so-called 'voluntary' resignations (which involve the lump sum payment of \$4000 to those who 'volunteer' to resign) and enforced sackings at the rate of ten a month over 20 months.

The Bellambi Coal Company is arguing that the sackings at South Bulli are the result of lower contract coal prices and tonnages. It is quite true that there have been substantial reductions to the contract price of South Bulli coal and contracted tonnages to Japanese steelmakers have dropped from 985 000 tonnes in 1981 to 485 000 tonnes in 1983. However mines owned by giant transnational corporations (TNCs) such as Shell do not commence or shut up operations in 'knee-jerk' responses to market conditions. Loss-making operations can be sustained over long periods by cross subsidisation from profitable sections of the TNC's operations. For example Shell's coal operations only made a profit for the first time in 1981, after almost a decade of subsidisation by surpluses siphoned off from Shell's oil operations. As well South Bulli has been a profitable operation in the not too distant past. The Wollongong Workers Research Centre has estimated that in 1982 the mine made at least \$6 million profit.

The reality is that the latest round of sackings are simply an acceleration of a rationalisation and productivity improvement program initiated two years ago. The Bellambi Coal Company has in mind the possibility of extending mining westward on an adjacent mining lease called West Bellambi. The new operation would replace the South Bulli mine in the long term. It would commence at the earliest in 1986 and involve the employment of a total workforce at South Bulli and West Bellambi of 600–650 mineworkers

using two or three new longwall mining units.

To achieve this reduced workforce, Shell and the other owners are planning that by 1986 a further 200 jobs will have been destroyed. If the company's plans are successful, the workforce at the mine will have been reduced by over 45% or approximately 500 miners in the seven years between 1979 and 1986. The plan is still subject to final approval from Shell and the other owners, but if it goes ahead production at West Bellambi will be in the region of 1.6 to 1.8 million tonnes per year compared to the production at South Bulli in 1981 of 1.5 million tonnes by 1000 workers.

Over the years the South Bulli mine has been one of the major sources of paid employment for workers in the region and in terms of the number of mineworkers employed, the pit is still the largest in the region. As well, the mine has been a consistent supplier of high quality hard coking coal to overseas steelmakers including Japanese, Taiwanese, Indian and South Korean steel companies.

Within the past twelve months the stockpile of South Bulli coal awaiting transportation by truck to the port of Port Kembla has grown to gigantic proportions — 600 000 tonnes worth \$29 million. The stockpile lies between the mine and the main highway linking Wollongong's northern suburbs with the central business district. Despite the Bellambi Coal Company being well aware in late 1982 of the likelihood of greatly reduced revenues in 1983, the company continued to encourage production and to maintain a production bonus scheme on a daily basis.

Many miners at South Bulli have now reached the conclusion that the stockpiles at the pit have been purposely built up as a public relations exercise to justify the 1983 round of sackings in a community which is finding daily existence increasingly difficult, with real unemployment now reaching close to 30%.

These recent moves at South Bulli by the Bellambi Coal Company reflect, in part, Shell's responses to the present depressed state of the world coal markets. Shell is now a major coal mining and trading company worldwide and developments at South Bulli can only be understood fully when placed in the context of Shell's unfolding international and Australian coal strategy.

#### FROM OIL TO COAL

Shell's first moves into coal on a large scale internationally began in the mid-1970s. This reflected a trend amongst the major oil TNCs which had begun in the late 1960s in the USA. In 1966 coal was considered a declining industry incapable of surviving competition from fuel oils, natural gas and

nuclear energy. However, available oil supplies in the period 1966–69 were barely adequate to meet the rising demand from public utilities in the USA. It was during this period that a swingback to coal as a source of energy began.

This swingback to coal was further encouraged by the technical, economic and political problems associated with nuclear energy, the increasing demand from European and Japanese steelmakers for coking coal and the foreseen rapid depletion of oil and natural gas resources. As a result the major USA oil companies began investing in coal in the late sixties, primarily to restrict coal's competition with oil. Thus by 1970, 32% of USA coal production was controlled by oil companies. At that same time, at the prevailing rates of consumption, known existing oil reserves could not be expected to last long into the next century. Increasingly coal was seen as a viable alternative to oil.

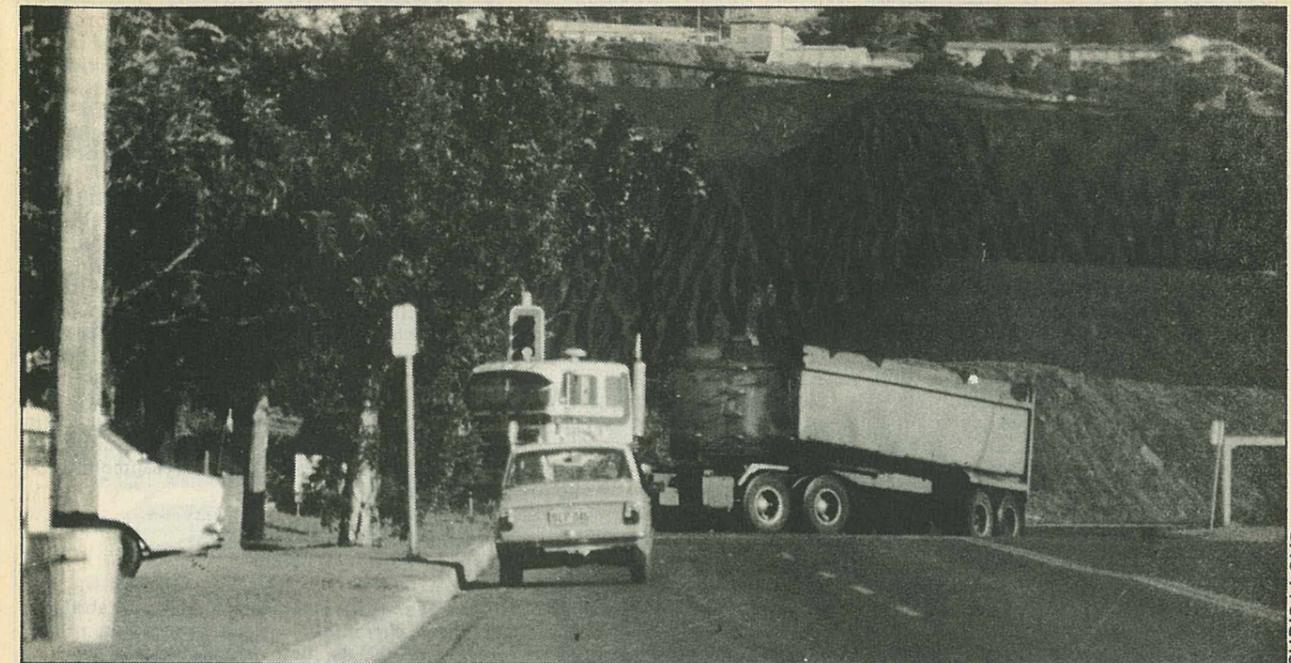
The worldwide move to coal by the oil TNCs was precipitated further by the 1970–73 oil supply crisis as Middle East countries manoeuvred for a greater share in the revenues from their own oil fields. The events of 1970–73 culminated in a fourfold increase in the price of oil in 12 months and price increases which were to continue up until the deepening of the global depression and oversupply of oil in the early 1980s. These increases coupled with the finite nature of oil reserves and a perception of the Middle East as being an unreliable supplier enhanced further the value of coal as an energy source.

It is against this background that Shell began buying up big in coal in the mid-1970s. In 1980 the chairperson of Shell Trading Company stated:

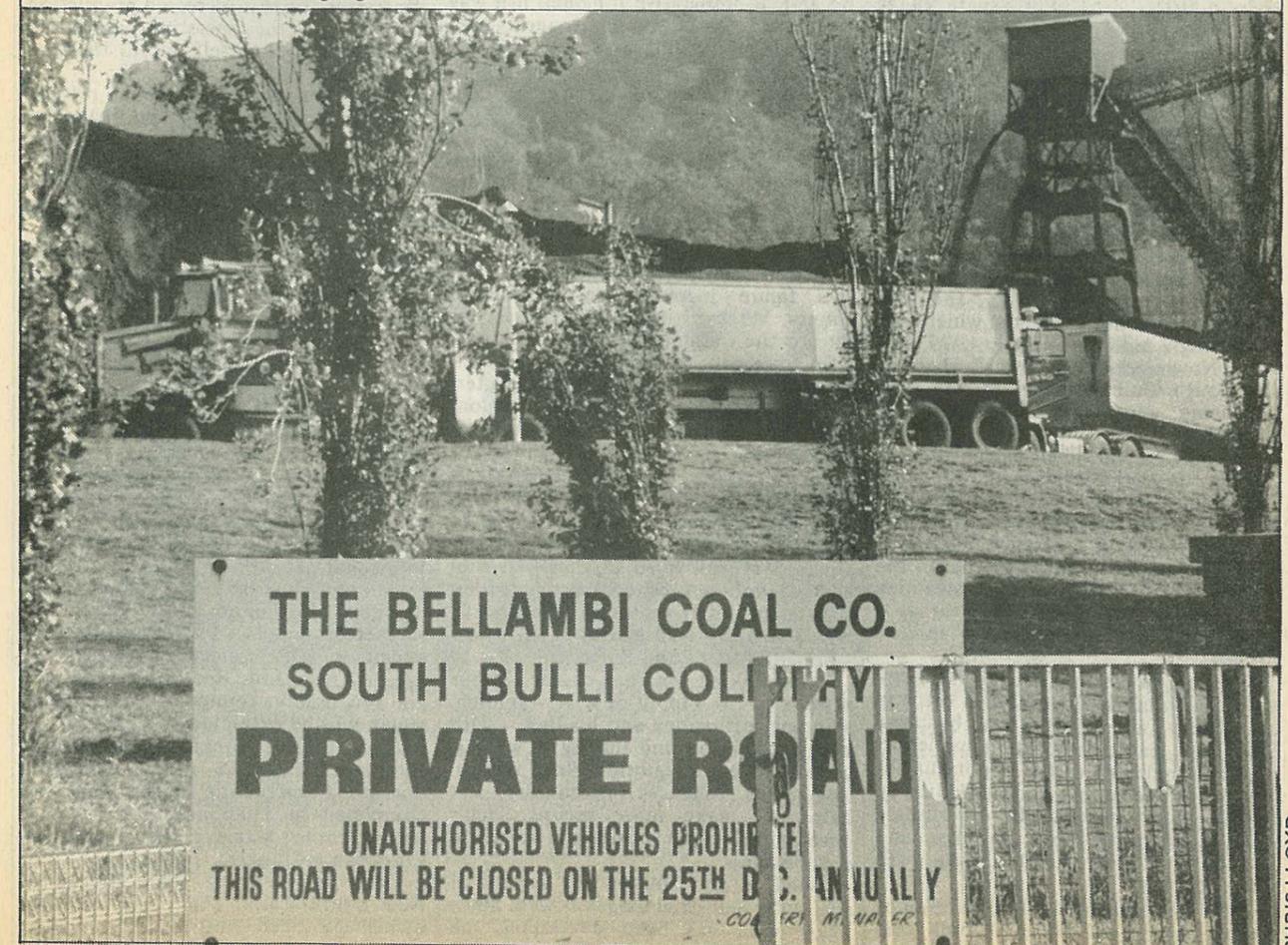
Coal is destined to take the place of oil as the world's balancing fuel for the rest of the twentieth century and possibly beyond ... since oil is no longer the universally applicable and available balancing fuel that it has been for so long. Other fuels will have to grow in availability to take up the world energy demand.

Since the mid-1970s the aim of the major transnational oil companies, including Shell, has been to organise the end of oil as profitably as possible by attempting to control competition from other energy sources such as coal and natural gas. By investing huge sums of capital in the non-oil energy sectors the major oil TNCs are attempting to recreate monopoly powers over the entire energy field which they once held exclusively over oil.

Much of the capital needed for this diversification has come directly from oil operations. This has been possible because they have maintained their monopoly over final supply (despite ownership by national governments of 48% of oilfield reserves) and have been able to pass onto consumers price



Above and page 25: Trucks leaving the South Bulli colliery with the coal stockpile in the background and a residential road in the foreground. The resident action group has complained to the Bellambi Coal Company that their furnishings are being destroyed by coal dust from the stockpile but have received no satisfactory response. Below: Entrance to the South Bulli coal mine which is in Wollongong's suburbs.



increases that are far in excess of their own costs. By a range of strategies such as selling part of their oilfields, inviting the producing countries to participate, by selling off the least profitable parts of their businesses, and by selling oil produced in non-OPEC fields at or near OPEC prices, the major oil transnational corporations have been able to siphon off funds to build their own new 'energy oligopoly'.

## SHELL'S COAL STRATEGY

Shell, along with most other major oil TNCs, set out in the mid-1970s to achieve a measure of control over the process of coal production and marketing. Royal Dutch President, Dirk de Bruyne, has stated that Shell's intent is to carve out a 10% stake in the world coal trade.

Shell's coal strategy has four elements.

The first element has involved Shell gaining quickly a significant stake in world coal production. Shell achieved this by going on a spending spree in the late 1970s in which it took control of substantial shares in producing coal mines. In the space of three years, 1977-80, Shell became an important world coal producer, buying shares in coal mines around the world, including:

- in mid-1977, a 37.2% share (later extended to 42%) in the four New South Wales mines owned by Austen and Butta producing 2 million tonnes of coking and steaming coal annually.
- in mid-1977, a 16.5% share in the four Queensland steaming coal mines owned by Thiess Holdings also producing in the vicinity of 2 million tonnes of steaming coal annually. This share was later sold but Shell became a joint venture partner with the new mine owner CSR (in 1979) in a number of new development projects and the steaming coal mine Callide which was producing 2 million tonnes in 1979.
- in November 1979, a 45% share in the South Bulli colliery, at the time producing about 1.5 million tonnes annually.
- in March 1980, Shell paid \$USA680 million for a 50% stake in AT Massey's, the second largest USA coal exporter and the tenth largest USA coal producer. Through AT Massey, Shell control 1000 million tonnes of coal in the Appalachians, 70% of which is steaming coal. Production in its first year as a Shell subsidiary reached 13.3 million tonnes.

The second element in Shell's strategy has been to establish itself as a force in the supply side of the coal business. Shell has learnt from its experiences in the oil industry of the importance of control of the supply and marketing to overall profit making. In establishing itself as an important supplier and distributor of coal, Shell has taken three strategic steps:

- Shell has taken over the operation of one of the largest fleets of bulk coal

carriers in the world and in 1981 became the first oil TNC to build its own new bulk carrier when it put into service two new 120 000 tonne dead-weight carriers.

- Shell has bought shares in a number of major coal export and import terminals at which coal is loaded onto and off ships, including a 15% share in the Richards Bay export terminal in South Africa, an 11% share in the Aarhus import terminal in Denmark, and a 27% share in the Maasvlakte import terminal in the Netherlands. Shell is also building new export terminals at Newport News and Charleston in the USA.

- Shell has set up in the world coal trade as an important buyer and seller of coal, particularly thermal coal which replaces oil in power generation. The impetus for Shell's involvement in coal trading has come partly from the extra profits to be made from the linking together of production and distribution of coal.

But there is another reason for Shell beginning to trade coal. After the oil price rises in 1974 Shell's traditional oil buyers (especially European industries and utilities) began to shop around for cheaper energy sources and particularly thermal coal. Coal trading became an imperative for Shell if it was to maintain the monopoly grip over energy supplies it shared with other oil TNCs.

1978 was the first year of coal trading for Shell. That year it handled 2 million tonnes - 1% of world coal trade. 370 000 tonnes of that figure represented Australian-produced trade. In 1979 Australian-traded coal volume increased by 114% to just under 800 000 tonnes. By 1980 Shell was trading 5 million tonnes worldwide and in 1981 this figure increased to 12 million tonnes. Much of the 1981 increase was due to the trading activities of the new USA Shell subsidiary AT Massey, which traded over 6.4 million tonnes internationally on top of its own production. Shell aims to trade 25 million tonnes of coal in 1985.

In Australia Shell is becoming a significant marketer of coal with long-term supply contracts with a number of other coal producers such as Thiess-Dampier-Mitsui. Shell also markets substantial volumes of coal produced by Australian joint venture operations in which it is involved and by its associate company Austen and Butta.

This linking together of the various aspects of the supply of coal - trading, shipping, offloading and loading - with coal exploration and mining is what is called vertical integration. Such vertical integration enhances profitability, and helps to make more secure Shell's developing strategic position in the world coal business.

Shell is also linking the supply of coal with industrial usages as well. Since 1974 Shell has been developing the

Shell/Koppers coal gasification process. In 1980 Shell announced it would invest \$USA140 million in the construction of a Netherlands gasification plant in 1984 to gasify 1000 tonnes of coal a day operating in conjunction with a combined cycle power station using both gas and steam turbines.

The first two elements in Shell's coal strategy had been carried through by the end of 1981. Shell had quickly established a sizeable share of world coal production and had entrenched itself within the structures of the worldwide coal industry. In short, it had built for itself a secure base for future expansion. This success is indicated by the fact that in 1981 Shell made its first overall profit of £UK 52 million from coal. This profit was made despite the substantial amounts of capital tied up in development projects.

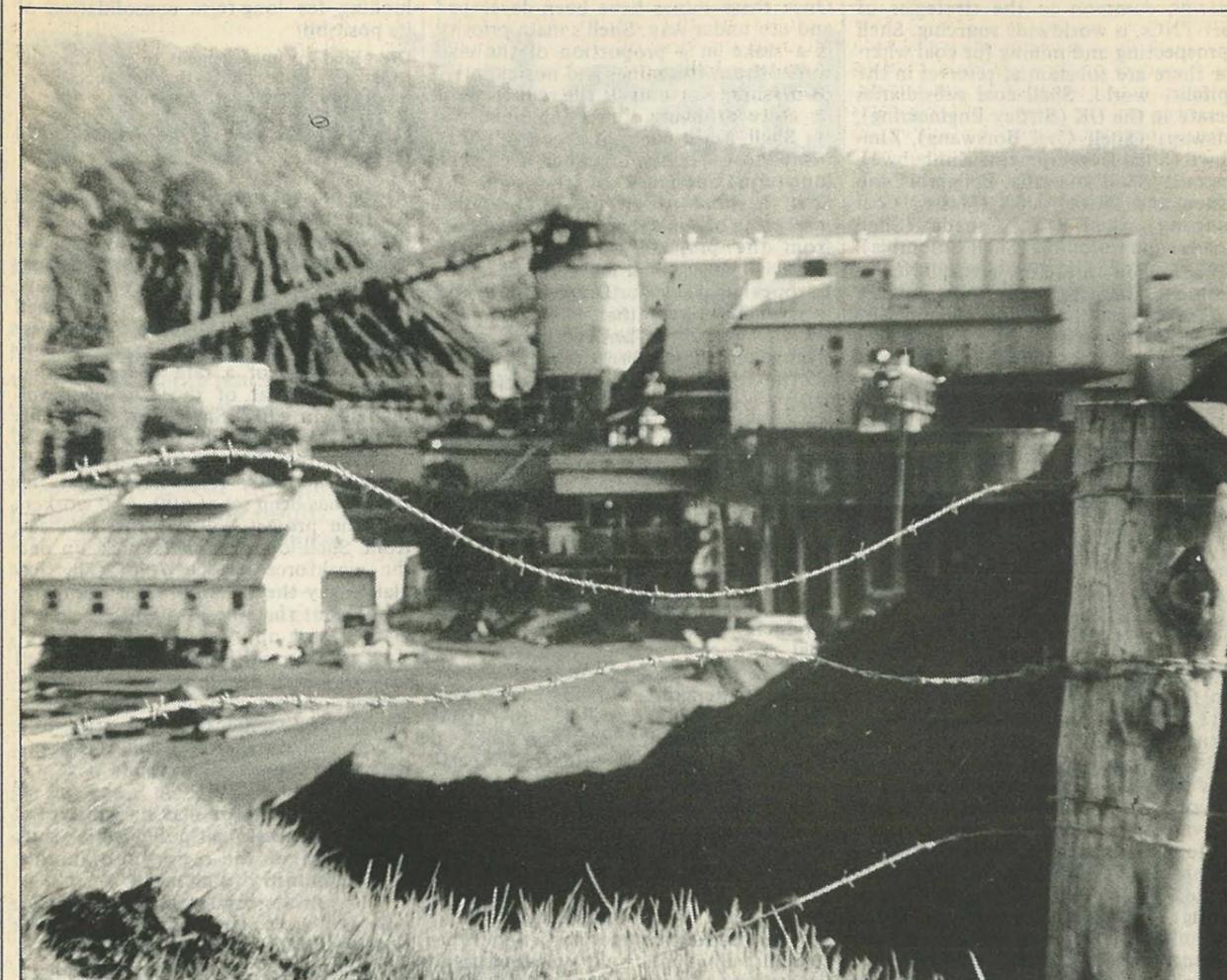
## INCREASING COAL PRODUCTION

The third element in Shell's coal strategy is to rapidly expand production in the 1980s as new development projects come into production and old producing mines have their capacities increased either by the extension of leases or the application of new technology. Shell's strategy is for this increased production to feed into the operating base it has already built for itself within the coal industry in the late 1970s.

Shell has played a major role in financing (so-called front end financing) new coal development projects since the mid-1970s. A number of them are now coming into production. The major developments just completed or nearing completion are:

- Shell Oil's Buckskin mine in Wyoming, USA. Production began in 1981 and is scheduled to rise to 6 million tonnes a year by 1984.
- Line Creek Coal mine in Canada. This mine is 95% owned by Crows Nest Resources Ltd, a subsidiary of Shell Canada. Total recoverable volumes are 8.7 million tonnes thermal coal, 19.8 million tonnes coking coal (mining of this will commence in April 1983), and 1.75 million tonnes annually of steaming coal (the first shipments of which began to South Korea in April 1982). A long-term contract was signed in July 1980 to supply Japanese blast furnace steel-makers with 1 million tonnes yearly.
- Rietspruit Coal mine in South Africa which is 50% owned by Shell Coal South Africa Ltd. Recoverable reserves are 346 million tonnes of thermal coal which will be extracted at a rate of 5.5 million tonnes annually. Shell Coal International is to market all production. Construction of the mine was completed in 1980 and in 1981 5.1 million tonnes was exported, mainly to European coal users.

- Drayton Steaming Coal Project in New South Wales. This project is 39% owned by Shell Australia. Production



Above: South Bulli coal washery and conveyor system with the coal stockpile in the background.  
Far left: Coal conveyor system.  
Left: Longwall mining units at South Bulli mine prior to installation.

SHELL

began early in 1983. Planned annual production is 3.2 million tonnes.

- German Creek in Queensland. Shell's interest in this mine is 25% (counting indirect equity through Austen and Butta). Production began in October 1981. Planned maximum annual production is 4 million tonnes.

Planned annual production of these new mines approaches 22 million tonnes

by 1984. To the production from these entirely new mines must be added the extra production from the expansion of older mines and the extra production from new leases acquired by companies Shell holds an interest in. This extra production includes:

- a doubling of the production of the Callide mine in Queensland from 2 to 4 million tonnes per year.

- a planned doubling of the USA subsidiary AT Massey's production capacities from around 6 to 12 million tonnes per annum over the next ten years.

- extra production from Bellambi Coal Company's leases at West Bellambi and Dartbrook, and Austen and Butta's East Lithgow lease.

The fourth element in Shell's coal

CHRIS LLOYD

SHELL

strategy, common to the strategies of most TNCs, is worldwide sourcing. Shell is prospecting and mining for coal wherever there are substantial reserves in the capitalist world. Shell coal subsidiaries operate in the UK (Birtley Engineering), Botswana (Shell Coal Botswana), Zimbabwe (Shell Developments Zimbabwe), Australia (Shell Australia, Bellambi Coal, Austen and Butta), USA (Massey Coal Company, Shell Oil), Canada (Shell Canada) and Colombia (Shell Colombia).

Worldwide sourcing gives TNCs a footloose characteristic. They are not inextricably tied to production and sales in any one region or country. Should the Canadian or South African coal industry be plunged into crisis Shell would suffer losses but not sufficient to threaten its overall viability.

For the bosses of TNCs worldwide sourcing also means that the production process is broken up and spread around the globe. This makes it harder for workers to organise about demands and to protect hard-won conditions.

### SHELL'S AUSTRALIAN OPERATIONS

By 1980 Shell had put its coal strategy into full effect in Australia. In January 1983 joint ventures in which Shell was a partner and Shell's associate Austen and Butta controlled mines with the potential for developing a maximum annual production of 14 million tonnes, and had reserves of 1500 million tonnes. Underdeveloped reserves at East Lithgow, Dartbrook, West Bellambi and Theodore totalled a further 2000 million tonnes. During 1981 the company had spent \$121 million on further mine developments and at the end of 1981, the *Australian Financial Review* valued Shell's investment in Drayton, Theodore, Bellambi (not including unmined leases), Callide and Austen and Butta at approximately \$400 million.

Shell had established itself as a coal trader marketing in the vicinity of 1 million tonnes yearly exploiting its traditional links with European energy buyers. It had bought for itself a sizeable stake in export coal producing mines through the purchase of major interests in Austen and Butta and the Bellambi Coal Associates Joint Venture.

Once having carved out a position in the market Shell had set the stage for a rapid expansion in its coal interests through its involvement in a number of major new developments. Drayton and German Creek have recently commenced production. Planned maximum annual production of these two mines is over 7 million tonnes — almost twice the export tonnage of Shell's operating mines in 1981.

Shell has played a major role in providing front end financing for these projects and the assemblage of technology. In both Drayton and German Creek Shell has reduced its share prior to the end of initial mine development.

Once these mines have been developed and are under way, Shell's main priority is a stake in a proportion of the coal traded from the mines and not majority ownership. Not only is the reduction of its share probably a profitable exercise for Shell, but it may not necessarily lead to reduced profits for Shell from the long-term operation of the mines if Shell has control of the international marketing of substantial volumes of coal from the projects. According to the financial press, Shell has contracts with European markets for Drayton coal, and it is highly likely that Shell is an important marketing link with European steelmakers in the German Creek project.

The present period is crucial for Shell's coal development prospects. So far its expansion has been more or less according to corporate programming. But the capitalist mode of production is again going through deepening crisis after 30 years of a long boom in which productive capacities expanded dramatically.

It is likely that the current depression will have serious ramifications for coal producing companies, particularly coking coal producers, as they compete for a share in contracts to meet a smaller aggregate demand from Japanese and European steelmakers. Shell will not be able to continue its expansion unless it is at the expense of other producers' market shares.

The jobs of mineworkers employed by Shell are likely to come increasingly under attack during the economic crisis. However Shell has a number of strengths that should help it at least maintain its market share and its profitability.

The distribution and marketing infrastructure Shell has built up places it at a distinct advantage over those companies that simply produce coal and enter into yearly contract negotiations with regular customers. For example up until March 1983 Japanese producers were negotiating with different regional groupings to drive down 1983 contract prices and volumes. Shell was represented in all producing regions and therefore had an edge in terms of market intelligence.

As a major marketer, Shell can always act to protect its own standing as a producer by aggressively seeking regular and spot contracts for supply from its own mines first. Moreover its vertically integrated supply and production structure should enable it to operate at lower costs than competitors.

Companies such as Shell with substantial capital reserves can sit out downturns and even depressions, taking advantage of the economic conditions to increase their stake as smaller companies are forced to sell out. It is precisely during depressions that the oil TNCs such as Shell will have their greatest chance to restructure and become dominant influences within the coal industry. Shell's managing director in Australia said recently that Shell was

looking for long-term consolidation of its position:

I've asked my management to very critically review any opportunity that may occur that results from people getting nervous.

### RATIONALISATION AT SOUTH BULLI

At the present time Shell can be expected to favour its newer, larger low cost developments, such as Drayton and German Creek, over some of its higher cost underground mines which have been operating for some time. Shell may very well be attracted to the West Bellambi/South Bulli proposal but only on the basis of a rate of return that approaches that of those newer developments in which Shell is involved. This would require a ceiling to the number of workers employed and reasonably assured markets. It is likely that the ceiling has been set at 600-650 workers and the project will get the go-ahead from Shell once markets pick up and the workforce has been cut. This explains why the Bellambi Coal Company is adamant that the jobs will go even if markets pick up.

If those conditions are not met, Shell may very well decide to invest its development capital elsewhere. This throws into relief the precarious situation of a region such as Illawarra which is dominated by four highly mobile TNCs — BHP, BP, Shell and CRA — any one of which is capable of making substantial changes in investment policy which shift capital out of the region into another or from industry to industry.

The job destruction at South Bulli is only the latest round of attacks on jobs which have led to over 1000 miners in the Illawarra going on the dole queue. The most fertile ground for any campaign to stop the sackings in the coal industry lies in a coordinated campaign by all five mining unions — FED&FA, Miners Federation, ETU, AMFSU, and Mine Mechanics — to intervene in the issues of the introduction of new technology, the setting up of a national coal marketing authority, and the balanced planning of open cut and underground mine development. As well, any campaign will have to involve a high degree of rank-and-file activism and the support of various local communities which derive much of their income from the industry.

An attack on the public images of the mining corporations as depicted in the media would be an easy, essential and effective part of any such campaign. Stories such as that of the South Bulli sackings can help illustrate the hard facts that contradict the distorted public image that TNCs such as Shell present.

Mark Cole works with the Wollongong Workers Research Centre and has recently completed a report on the ownership, operation and recent profitability of the South Bulli mine and the Bellambi Coal Associates Joint Venture.

# The wild card

The 5 March 1983 federal elections saw a landslide win for the Hawke-led Australian Labor Party. One of the biggest media issues in the lead up to the election was the campaign to stop the damming of the Franklin River in South West Tasmania. How much effect did this issue have on the election result? Adam Carr looks at the figures and examines that question.

Did the Franklin dam issue bring down the Fraser government?

Certainly, many of those most closely involved with the Liberals' debacle think so. Alan Jarman, who lost his Victorian suburban seat of Deakin to the Australian Labor Party (ALP) after seventeen years, has publicly blamed his own and the Fraser government's defeat squarely on 'the stupidity of people in federal cabinet', who could not see that the dams issue had struck deep roots in the electorate, and that the then federal government's failure to intervene to prevent the Tasmanian government building the dam would cost it a great many votes. Many other Liberal Party (LP) candidates and campaign workers share this view. They believe that the decision of the National South West Coalition (NSWC, comprising chiefly the Tasmanian Wilderness Society and the Australian Conservation Foundation) to urge voters to support the ALP and the Australian Democrats (AD) in the 5 March 1983 federal election was one of the two decisive factors that cost the Liberals office. The other factor was Bob Hawke's seizure of the Labor leadership on the day the election was announced. Naturally enough, the activists of the NSWC are also eager to promote this view.

Certainly, there is a great deal of evidence to show that the dams issue did do the Liberals a lot of damage, particularly in Victoria. The huge swing by middle-class eastern suburbs voters away from the Liberals on 5 March certainly needs a deal of explaining, and the dams issue seems to be an obvious factor.

Adam Carr is assistant editor of *Outrage*, Melbourne's magazine for lesbians and gay men, and is an amateur psephologist (election analyst).

We can, to some extent, measure this factor. Because the NSWC issued its own pro-ALP How To Vote cards, rather than just urge its supporters to vote Labor, and because in some seats these cards gave a different order of recommended preferences than did the official ALP card, we can measure the size of the conscious No Dams vote in these seats. For instance, in the seat of Diamond Valley in Melbourne's outer north-eastern suburbs, the result on 5 March was:

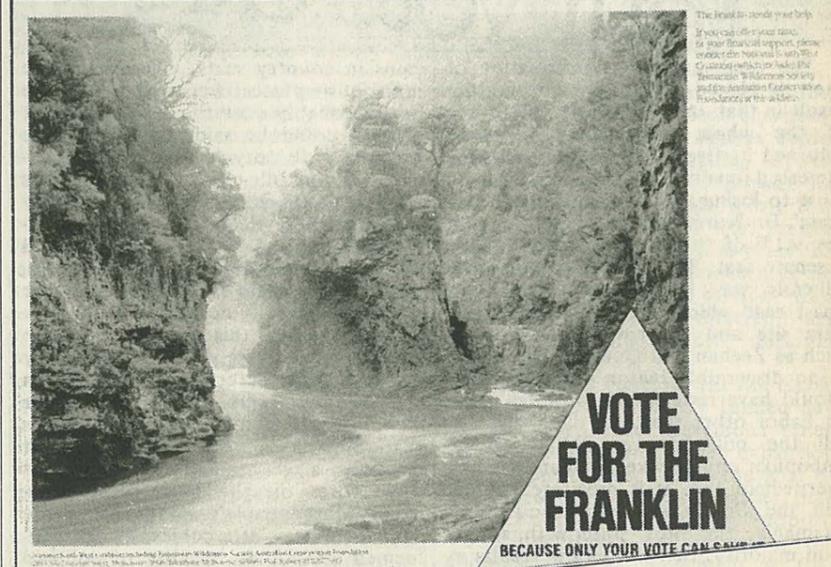
ALP	46.4% (up 6.0% on 1980)
LP	45.4% (down 3.2% on 1980)
AD	6.5% (down 4.5% on 1980)
Others	1.4% (up 1.4% on 1980)

Scrutineers claim that nearly 15.0% of all ALP voters followed the NSWC preference order rather than the official ALP one. This constitutes 6.9% of all the votes cast in the electorate, which, together with the 60% of AD voters who gave their second preferences to Labor, gives a hard core No Dams vote of about 10%; large enough to account for this very middle-class seat going to the ALP even if, as is indicated by survey evidence, only half of that

10% voted Liberal last time. Similar patterns can be detected in other seats, such as Phillip (NSW) and Bowman (Qld), where the NSWC card differed from the ALP card.

If we assume that this pattern repeated itself in all suburban electorates, at least in the eastern mainland states, we could reasonably claim that three seats in Victoria (Casey, Diamond Valley and Flinders), one in NSW (Phillip) and two in Queensland (Peirie and Fadden) were swung to Labor by the dams issue. Flinders on Melbourne's southern fringe seems a particularly clear case. Here the Liberal member, Peter Reith, was elected on a hypocritical No Dams campaign in the December 1982 federal by-election, a campaign which caused great tension in the Liberal Party. The hapless Reith, who of course said not a word when the Fraser government's decision not to intervene was announced, seems to have suffered a firm No Hypocrites vote, and was swept away by one of the largest swings in Victoria.

Three other pieces of evidence seem to reinforce the view that the dams issue played a large, perhaps decisive, role in



National South West Coalition election campaign posters.

Mr. Fraser won't save it. Your vote can.

the Liberals' defeat. One is the significantly high vote polled by the independent conservationist candidate, Milo Dunphy, who received 12.5% against the Treasurer, John Howard, in his Sydney suburban seat of Bennelong. This is a very high vote for an independent in a city seat, particularly against such a well-known and personally popular member as Howard.

The second factor is the extraordinary recovery of the Democrats' vote for the senate in the last two weeks of the campaign from a position in the opinion polls which gave them little chance of returning more than two senators to a position where they retained their existing five. This may have been due in part to effective advertising and to Chipp's shrewd last-minute revival of the almost forgotten uranium issue, but the Democrats highly-visible stand on the dams issue — and the NSW's call for a senate Democrat vote — seems to have been the main factor in their comeback. The AD always poll better in the senate than in the house of representatives, but on 5 March the gap was wider than ever before. It might be possible to argue that the ALP's relatively poor showing in the senate and the AD's poor showing in the lower house were due to voters following the NSW ticket and splitting their vote, but this would be hard to prove.

have been swung against a formidable leader and an entrenched government by the issue of a dam in a remote corner of the smallest state, no matter how brilliantly conceived, well-organised and lavishly funded was the campaign against the dam, particularly when one remembers the failure of the life-and-death uranium issue to perform the same trick in 1977 or 1980. How can it really be argued that the record level of unemployment, the crippling burden of interest rates in the mortgage-belt suburbs, the deepening recession, health costs, and all the rest, let alone the impact of Hawke's leadership push, were less important in determining the result than one dam in Tasmania?

This scepticism is reinforced by the arithmetic of the election result. The ALP needed to pick up 11 Liberal/National Party seats to win. They picked up 23. If we accept the calculations given above on the impact of the dams vote, which attribute the outcome in 6 seats to that impact, we see that the ALP would still have picked up 17 seats and won the election had there not been any dams vote at all. It is difficult to see that the dams issue played any part in Labor's five gains in pro-development Western Australia, where the issues were interest rates and the discrediting of the local Liberals by the tax scandals. Nor in Labor's six

collective consciousness over a period of time.

Despite the recession, the unemployment, and all, Fraser could have been re-elected, as he was in 1980 when things weren't much better, if the electorate had believed that his government had a clear view (never mind which view) of how to solve the nation's problems and honestly intended to pursue it. The electorate believed this in 1977 and in 1980, but had stopped believing it in 1983. Once that belief had gone, all Fraser's tricks and lies were not able to save him.

The electorate finally lost all faith in Malcolm Fraser because his record of hypocrisy and cynicism became too much to conceal. Fraser was strong on rhetoric about small government, about tax cuts, about interest rates, about health costs, about integrity in public life, about equity of sacrifice, about opposition to racism. Not only was all this rhetoric not lived up to, it was blatantly and cynically not lived up to. Despite our reputation for selfishness and complacency, even Australians will take only so much of such treatment. In 1983, faced with a choice between more of the same under Fraser, and at least the promise of honesty and purpose under Hawke, we threw the bastards out.

The Tasmanian dams issue was a clear test of the substance behind Fraser's rhetoric. Environmental issues were one of the few areas where he had a reputation for some credibility, even if his achievements, such as on whaling and at Fraser Island, involved little cost to him. But the dams issue, like the land rights issue, tested in a public way Fraser's preparedness to stand up to conservative state governments and corporate and bureaucratic vested interests in defence of his professed principles. He failed that test dismally.

The electorate watched carefully as Fraser and Peter Reith shrewdly exploited the dams issue to win the Flinders by-election in the last month of 1982. Then they watched as Fraser casually threw the whole thing over with his decision not to intervene to prevent the Franklin dam, using the same spurious and discredited rhetoric of 'states rights' that has to be used to justify government inaction on land rights and a host of other questions. As the voters in the suburban marginals crystallised their verdicts on Fraser in the first two months of 1983, this may have been a decisive catalyst in their decision to reject him. I suspect it significantly affected the votes of many more people than the 5-10% who consciously cast their ballots on the basis of the dams question. While Fraser didn't lose explicitly because he failed to stop the Franklin dam, he lost because that failure, in concert with other failures, confirmed in so many peoples' minds their existing suspicion that Malcolm Fraser was a hypocrite, a liar and a fraud.

Vote for the  
Franklin  
Dam  
Your vote can  
save it

The final, negative confirmation of the role played by the dams issue is the result in that unhappy island, the source of the whole controversy. Tasmania returned its five Liberal MHRs, all with increased majorities. The ALP came close to losing a senate seat. The Democrats' Dr Norm Sanders failed to gain the 9.1% of the vote necessary to win a senate seat. The biggest swing to the Liberals was in Braddon, the west-coast seat which includes the Franklin dam site and the towns closest to it such as Zeehan and Queenstown. There is no discernible reason why Tasmania should have resisted the national swing to Labor other than the dams dispute. All the polls showed Fraser to be unpopular and Hawke popular, there as everywhere else. It is precisely Labor's and the Democrats' poor showing in Tasmania, the only state with a pro-dam majority, that makes the results in the other states more easily attributable to the dams issue. Furthermore, the position seems to have worsened in Tasmania as it has improved elsewhere.

And yet, and yet. Many people will still find it hard to believe that a national election could

gains in country seats, where dams are notorious vote catchers and where the issue probably cost the ALP votes. At best, it could be said, the dams issue was a contributory factor, most observable in middle-class, issue-conscious seats like Diamond Valley and Casey (some of these electorates, like environmentally-minded La Trobe and Macquarie where there were 10% swings, were already held by Labor), that the ALP did not really need to win.

I think that this view of the dam issue being merely a contributory factor, while defensible, overlooks a central fact about political behaviour in a modern democracy. That fact is that only a minority, and in most elections a very small minority, cast their votes on the basis of a single issue. Most people's minds are made up on the basis of a subjective opinion, formed around the totality of political issues and personalities, as filtered to them through the media. Governments and oppositions win and lose elections, usually, not because they do or do not do or promise any specific thing, but because of the accumulated subjective impressions built up in the public

# Child care grows from the grassroots

Who should look after children? The state, private profit-making interests or the local community? The Community Child Care Collective looks at the growth of community-based child care over the last decade. And where to for the future?

This is a critical time for children's services in Australia. In spite of more than a decade of federal child care funding, only 3.5% of pre-school children have access to federally funded day care centres or family day care schemes, and an even smaller percentage of school age children have access to out of school hours care.

However, the federal Labor government has a sound child care policy, and was elected on a promise of \$20 million extra for the federal children's services program. More than at any other time, there is reasonable accord between federal children's services policy and the policies of a significant number of state governments. This is extremely important, because in the past conflicting state and federal policies have blocked effective and systematic service development.

In 1969, there were only a handful (about 59) of publicly funded child care centres in Australia. This was in spite of the fact that married women were re-entering the labour force at an accelerating rate. By 1972, 25% of mothers with pre-school children were in paid work, and an even greater proportion of mothers of school age children. The need for occasional and part-time child care for mothers caring for children at home was also recognised as being very urgent.

The grassroots movement around child care which came to be known as 'the children's services movement', drew its membership from parents needing day care; workers in existing services

*The Community Child Care Association runs a resource and advisory centre in Melbourne to assist people with the planning, development and management of child care services and networks.*



Women and children of a community child care collective.

and local government; and participants in the women's movement, the trade union movement, community groups and a variety of other common-interest self-help groups.

There was shared understanding and conviction around a number of issues — firstly, about the effect of the acute lack of good quality day care on mothers and their children. This has always been especially urgent for non-English-speaking immigrants, where participation rates of mothers in the work force are higher than for other groups, and access to existing day care services lower. The practice of sending pre-school children back to the home country to be cared for by relatives is still common even today.

There was a recognition that mothers, caring for children at home, were often doing their job in extreme isolation, without support, and without any real value placed on their work by society. For women at home there is often nothing else but action around child care to raise consciousness about the real situation of their lives.

There was a questioning as to whether

existing service solutions were in fact very useful. The benevolent charitable basis of many day care centres denies parents any decision-making opportunities. The conditions of subsidy for most sessional pre-schools mean that these are only available for limited hours to children who are four years old. In general, there was a concern about the ways in which the services fragmented children into different age groups and families into different needs types.

Of particular concern was the recognition that unless publicly funded day care services were developed then there would be a progressive expansion of commercial care, where the goal of service provision is profit, rather than child development and family support.

The underlying philosophy of the children's services movement is that parents need to be involved in the decisions which affect their own and their children's lives, and that the family should be 're-surrounded' by networks of community support. Children's services which are in a small area, that is, those that are geared to

meeting the needs of families in a walking-distance neighbourhood, in an integrated way, can help re-create communities that are caring, self reliant and participatory.

Local government is the only level of government small enough to plan and coordinate small area services, and to enable groups of citizens to have access to decision-making structures. The emphasis on local government has in its turn implications for the federal and state levels. They need to develop forward-planning mechanisms and structures to enable local and neighbourhood level participation in service planning and management.

In 1972, the federal government entered the children's services field for the first time since the wartime forties, with the passing of the *Child Care Act*. In 1974, the then Whitlam Labor government established the Interim Committee of the Children's Commission which made available federal funds for a wide range of flexible locally and consumer-controlled services.

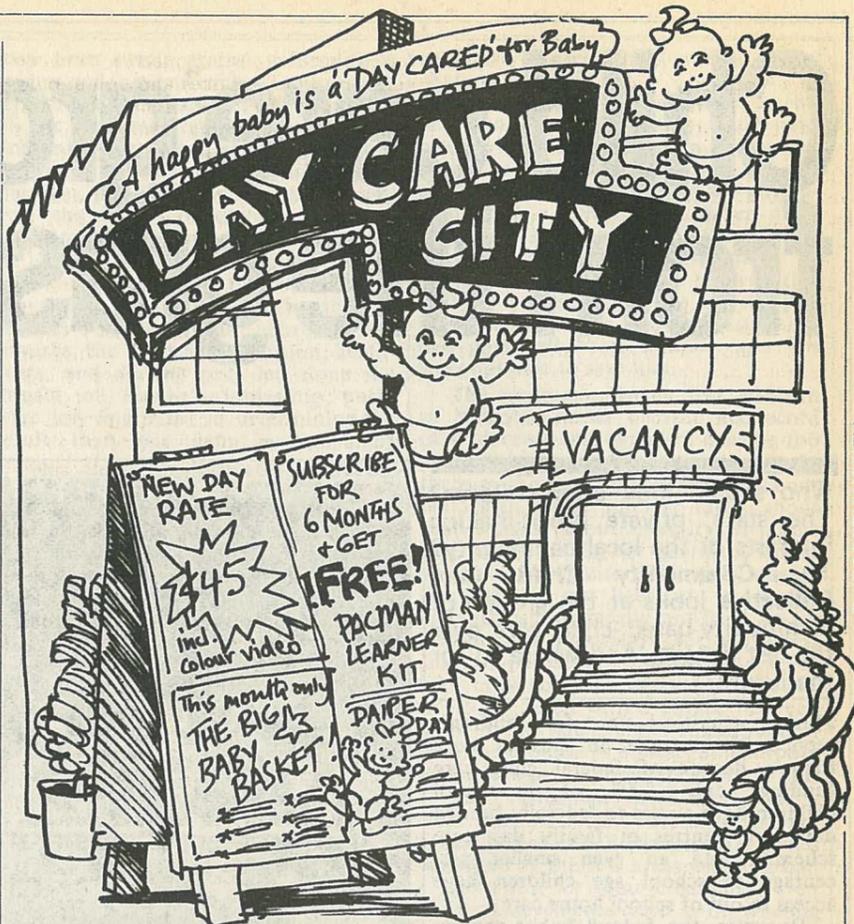
The commission had an excellent forward-planning framework in which to operate, but this framework was never fully implemented. In spite of this, federal funds were relatively successful in supporting the growth of neighbourhood children's centres all over Australia, plus locally based family day care schemes, (schemes which coordinate and supervise the care of other people's children in private households).

A study of six neighbourhood children's centres in Victoria, *Doing it Together*, published by Community Child Care Melbourne, found that the centres had served to link people who would otherwise have not known one another, and had developed practical support arrangements between people. They had given people a sense of 'I can', where before they thought, 'It's not possible', and a sense of belonging to their 'people' and their 'place'.

The critical importance of a neighbourhood community approach to children's services is best understood in terms of the totally unacceptable alternatives. Modern industrial society has substantially eroded the original functions of the family and all but destroyed neighbourhood community interaction. Responsibilities for children's education, health, cultural value transmission, psychological guidance etc are being progressively transferred away from the parents and community to the state, and to professional and private profit-making interests.

Parents usually deal with these other interests from a position of powerlessness. The creation of self reliant neighbourhoods is the only way to prevent the progressive takeover of child rearing by state, private and professional interests.

With the emphasis on community, the children's services movement has a



ELIZABETH HONEY

significant philosophical link with the movement concerned with the environment and the world's resources.

In Victoria, in particular, many people participate in both movements. Ruth and Maurie Crow are outstanding examples. Through her writings and involvement in the women's movement, children's services and energy conservation activities, Ruth made valuable links between these areas.

Ruth has also been strongly involved in children's services in her own municipality, Melbourne City. She worked with others in a 'community consultation', a joint effort between the city council and community groups to examine the need for and state of community services in the municipality.

Maurie was one of the contributors to the book *Seeds for Change: Creatively Confronting the Energy Crisis* in which creating community is the essential underpinning in a strategy which will enable people to meet their needs in less energy consuming ways. As a follow up to *Seeds for Change* Victoria's Community Energy Network prepared a *Local Plan to Conserve Transport Energy and to Improve Living* for Nunawading City Council. A key feature of the plan is the re-structuring of neighbourhoods around socially vital nodes such as neighbourhood centres.

The greatest threat to the federal

children's services program came in the 1982/83 budget when the Liberal government announced a series of measures which threatened the community base of the program. These included a pilot project to give public funds to centres run for profit, the funding of family day care at the expense of centre-based care, and the introduction of a means test designed to price publicly funded care out of the pockets of lower and middle income families.

The incoming Labor government immediately abandoned the pilot project, and is currently reviewing the income test.

Taking stock in the early eighties shows that we have lost some things in the preceding decade, and countered innumerable threats to community-based child care. But there have also been immeasurable gains - particularly in the personal development of the women involved in the movement at the neighbourhood level. From a situation of guilt, personal blame, a psychology of 'it'll all get better if we try a little bit harder', and reading books about being super mum and raising brighter children, thousands of women have moved outwards towards collective, geographically focussed action around child care.

All families have a right to child care for their children; and as the levels

of government with the most revenue-raising capacity, state and federal governments have a responsibility to fund it. But that does not mean they have a right to 'take over' child rearing, or to fund professional or private interests to take it over. Much has been learned about how government and community groups can work in partnership to develop services which are managed by the people who use them and those that live around them.

Services which are developed according to the community development principles of universal access, neighbourhood focus, and networking, community control, cultural relevance, integration and local planning and coordination can strengthen family and community life rather than weaken it.

A further study in 1982<sup>a</sup> estimates that if the *Seeds for Change* strategy was fully applied, then Nunawading residents could live - and live better - using only about one-third of the transport oil now required. The study also concludes that the whole Melbourne metropolitan area could, in 15 years time, conserve some two-thirds of the petrol it now uses, thus avoiding the need for schemes to convert Victoria's brown coal to oil.

In attempting to implement the *Seeds for Change* strategy, energy conservationists in Victoria are learning the same lessons as the children's services movement, where it has been

found that there is a connection between neighbourhood services and community development, and a national, state and local forward-planning framework. It is this same broad framework which will facilitate energy saving.

By 1980, it became increasingly evident that whilst this had been a decade of gain, the greatest loss had been the failure by the federal government to implement the forward-planning framework for children's services laid down in a report of the Social Welfare Commission, *Project Care: Children, Parents, Community*. The report recognised the need for national policy, adequate resources, community participation, and the observance of planning procedures. It proposed that local government have the key planning role. Each local government area would be rated on a needs scale, and advised of the amount of money which would be available to its area for children's services, once it had developed policies and service proposals through a community participation process.

Within this general framework, community groups were to be encouraged to put in submissions, assisted by federally funded and locally employed catalysts (later called children's services development officers). In fact the 'submission model' was implemented, but very little of the broader planning framework in which it was supposed to operate ever materialised. This led to a

savage attack on the 'submission model' and claims that the middle classes were taking over services.

Interestingly, in Victoria, where more local government authorities took up catalyst positions, the submission model worked surprisingly well, with initiative and responsibility being taken by hundreds of local communities, and funding going predominantly to services in priority needs areas.

If principles such as these are to be put into practice, then governments will need to develop cooperative forward-planning mechanisms where each level attaches conditions to the grants it passes on to other levels or onto community groups. These conditions should seek to ensure that services are delivered in accordance with the outlined principles, and to ensure that the level receiving funding from other levels in its turn further delegates responsibility 'downwards' according to the same conditions.

In any municipality it is likely that hundreds, thousands, even millions of dollars of public money is being spent on facilities and services that have either direct or indirect bearing on the well-being of the local children. Today community groups are beginning to ask whether the needs and interests of children are being best served by the way the money is being spent - or even whether they are being served at all. Are the available resources and cash being used to create 'anti-children' environments and to perpetuate services which some central bureaucracy thought was a good idea two decades ago?

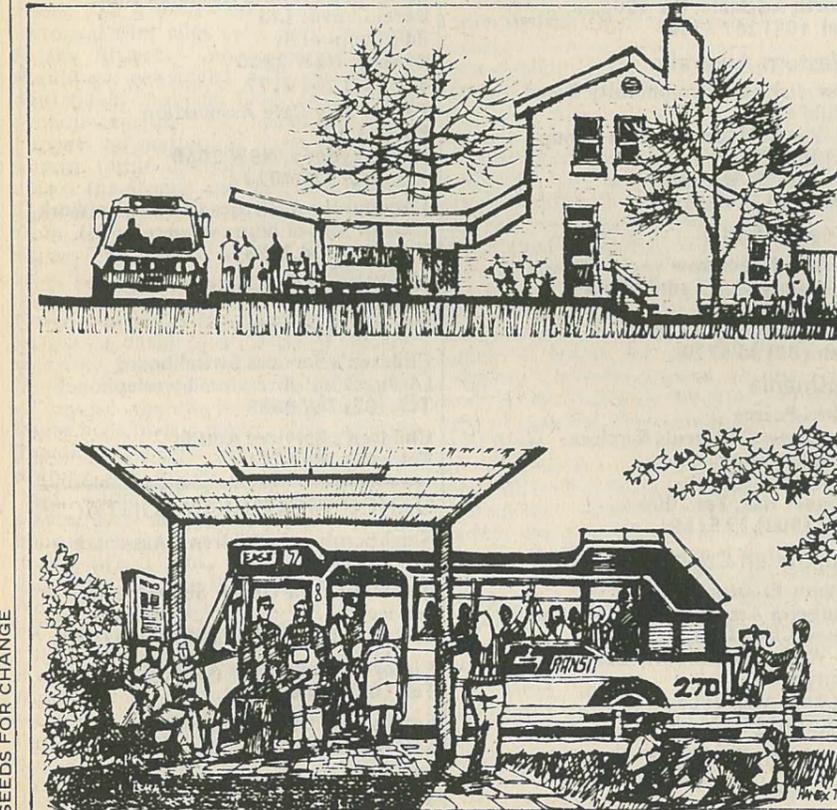
The only people likely to ask and act on these questions are the people who will benefit from change, the local residents and their children. And the only level of government which provides an appropriate participatory forum is the local level. At state and federal levels, the political and economic structures and systems are complex and hard to understand. Bringing planning down to the local level reduces these decision-making structures to more accessible proportions.

There are many examples of people gaining a greater say in local affairs through their involvement in local organisations. One parent involved in the establishment of one of the neighbourhood children's centres put it this way:

The house brings people who are concerned about the area they live in together - there's a group of people there whom you can get hold of, talk it out with, and if necessary take some action.<sup>2</sup>

#### References

1. Conservation of Urban Energy Group, *Nunawading Energy Study - An Assessment of the Energy Implications of Applying the Seeds for Change Model*, Conservation Council of Victoria, March 1982.
2. Sophie Inwald, *Doing it Together: A study of children's neighbourhood centres*, Community Child Care, 1979, page 141.



Under the *Seeds for Change* strategy, neighbourhood houses serve as a focus for public transport as well as child care.

## ACTION GUIDE

### Community child care contacts

There are many levels at which people can take action around issues like child care which affect children and their parents.

Firstly, there's the neighbourhood level. Action might mean finding others who live nearby who have children or are interested in becoming involved in children's issues. It might mean finding existing services, and seeing if they are relevant to the needs of the neighbourhood, and whether they provide opportunities for users and other residents to participate in management and other aspects of the service.

If there are no services in the neighbourhood, action might mean working with others to get something going. The first step could be the setting up of an informal network to meet each other's needs, such as a baby-sitting club or a playgroup. From then on in, it might be a matter of working together to attract funds for a more formal service.

The next level of action is local government. Does it have a policy on children's services? What plans are there to implement the policy? What structures are there through which residents can participate in ongoing policy review and implementation?

The degree of participation of local government in children's services varies enormously from state to state, and between municipalities within each state. But one thing is clear. Local government is less likely to become involved if residents don't push for it.

People can also take action around child care through the various organisations, they belong to – trade unions, women's organisations, environmental groups etc. This might mean making other members aware of child care issues, and encouraging the organisation to use its weight to lobby for appropriate government policies and funding.

The next levels of action are the state governments and the federal government. As the levels of government with the main revenue raising capacity, they have major responsibility for funding children's services, and for developing a co-operative forward-planning framework to enable local and neighbourhood services to develop.

Some of the organisations listed

below offer advice and assistance in getting things going at the neighbourhood or local level. Some provide a focus for political action on child care. Some do both.

#### NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY BASED CHILD CARE

The main objective of this recently formed association is to initiate and coordinate public action to promote and defend community-based children's services throughout Australia. It draws its membership from all those people who over the years have combined to fight for the creation of a federal Children's Services Program, and its survival as a community-based program. The following are contacts in each state:

##### New South Wales

Community Child Care  
34 Liverpool St  
Sydney, NSW 2000  
Tel: (02) 264 3211

##### Victoria

Community Child Care  
191 Brunswick St  
Fitzroy, Vic 3065  
Tel: (03) 419 1148

##### South Australia

Jill Chapman  
c/- Adelaide Women's Community Health Centre  
2 King William Rd  
North Adelaide, SA 5006  
Tel: (08) 267 5366

##### Western Australia

Association of Community Based Child Care  
c/- Social Welfare Action Group  
PO Box 262  
Leederville WA 6007  
Tel: (09) 335 6970

##### Queensland

Brenda Nancarrow  
c/- Sunnybank Family Care  
PO Box 163  
Sunnybank, Qld 4109  
Tel: (07) 34 5729

##### Tasmania

Vicki Pearce  
Tasmania Children's Services Action Group  
Channel Highway  
Bonnet Hill, Tas 7006  
Tel: (002) 29 5116

##### Australian Capital Territory

Dianne Proctor  
Canberra Association of Community Based Child Care  
c/- Woden Community Service  
Corrina St  
Woden, ACT 2606  
Tel: (062) 82 2644

##### Northern Territory

Julie Pollard  
c/- Darwin Family Centres Inc

17 Peel St  
Darwin, NT 5790  
Tel: (089) 818 4611

##### National

The interim president of the National Association of Community Based Child Care is:

Lynne Grayson  
c/- ACT Family Day Care Centre  
Woden Community Centre  
Lollipop Building  
Corrina Street  
Woden, ACT 2606  
Tel: (062) 52 0678

#### AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS

The ACTU Working Womens Centre in Melbourne is the base for the ACTU national Child Care Worker, Brenda Frobath. Brenda is employed to work with unions throughout Australia on child care issues –  
Working Womens Centre  
ACTU House, 393 Swanston St  
Melbourne, Vic 3000  
Tel: (03) 347 3966

#### OTHER NEW SOUTH WALES CONTACTS

Ethnic Child Care Development Unit  
Hut 15, 142 Addison Rd  
Marrickville, NSW 2204  
Tel: (02) 569 1288

Children's Services Resource and Development Ltd  
34 Liverpool St  
Sydney, NSW 2000  
Tel: (02) 267 2177

Family Day Care Association  
PO Box 12  
North Sydney, NSW 2060  
Tel: (02) 922 4020

Community Activities Centres Network  
(Out of school hours services)  
Tel: (02) 264 3488

Neighbourhood Children's Centres Association  
Tel: (02) 264 3211

Children's Services Switchboard  
(A directory of services by telephone)  
Tel: (02) 267 8888

Children's Services Action  
Tel: (02) 264 3211

#### OTHER VICTORIAN CONTACTS

Neighbourhood Children's Association  
Tel: (03) 529 5270

Association for Out of School Hours Services  
Tel: (03) 596 1945 or (03) 419 1105

Victorian Playgroups Association  
Tel: (03) 329 6464

Family Day Care Association  
Tel: (03) 743 6377

Victorian Co-operative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups  
Tel: (03) 419 5700

## REVIEWS

### Film

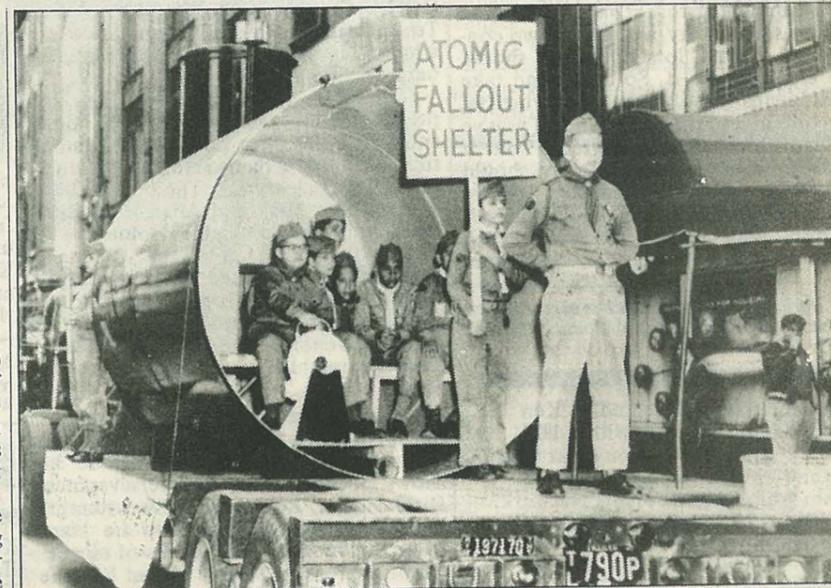
**The Atomic Cafe.** Produced and directed by Kevin Rafferty, Jayne Loader and Pierce Rafferty, 35 mm, colour, 88 minutes. Available from Sharmill Films, Tel: (03) 20 5329, and Everard Films, Tel: (02) 264 2635.

Reviewed by **Tim Darling**

*The Atomic Cafe* is something of an annoying film to review – tidily made, and good clean fun to watch (literally!) – it doesn't attempt to take itself seriously and consequently ends up being quite a satisfactory film within its own context. But, dear reader, is this enough? I fear that I must suggest that it is not!

The film was put together by the Archives Project from America, being the crowd who were responsible for bringing us *Rosie the Riveter*. Like *Rosie*, *The Atomic Cafe* is made out of historical film clips (was that the term in the fifties? – no sorry, I guess I should say newsreels), different defence department training films and official pronouncements by presidents and puppets on matters of Earth-shattering import (again literally!). The material covers the atomic and hydrogen bombs and other issues around nuclear weapons from Hiroshima through to the mid-fifties. The type of presentation ranges from the sublimely naive stupidity of a civil defence training film, *Duck and Cover*, through to catching the Pres having a laugh just seconds before solemnly announcing the dropping of a bomb on somewhere or other. Oh, and of course there's just heaps of reds under beds, nastie pastie, blow up your grandmother type propaganda. (If for nothing else do go to see the ad for 'two wonderful new shopping complexes here in California' – couldn't believe it.)

So, like I said, it's all good clean fun. What then is the problem? Well I reckon the problem with the film is a bit like the problem with this review: you're never quite sure if it's 'all there', if it's coming or going, or if perhaps there isn't something a whole lot more serious about all this – if only you could stop chortling about it. You see, *The Atomic Cafe* has no obvious structure. It starts off OK with a couple of lengthy chats with people connected to the Hiroshima A-bomb project, but



From the film *The Atomic Cafe*.

then quickly degenerates into film clip after film clip after film clip. Now most of these clips are totally unsourced (tomato? ketchup?) and it becomes obvious that some of them have been re-edited for this product. It also becomes difficult to determine whether the few captions provided came with the original or were added just recently. This means that any sense of understanding of this old propaganda, within its original context, is broken down. The material has been tampered with; largely it seems, to get a laugh, and thereby, I humbly suggest, to distance us from the reality of the effects of this type of material. Propaganda such as the stuff in this film has been very successful in developing and maintaining an immense level of fear and misinformation throughout American society (heh buddy, pay attention here, don't forget America means you and me and, golly, half the rest of the whole god damn world), and so allowing the largely unquestioned development of nuclear weapons and what we now call the arms race.

In short, the old propaganda has been turned on its head – by re-editing and ridiculous juxtaposing of film sequences, the makers have re-propagandised the material as an attack on its original form.

And therein lies the very crux of

my annoyance at having to review *The Atomic Cafe*. I am suggesting that the film should have attempted to do more than it set out to do. Not so much criticising the film as taking umbrage at what I see as a lack of realised potential within the film's structure and content. I find it a mite unsettling to be encouraged so much to only laugh at propaganda which is nothing but a close relative to the ways in which America pushes its militaristic policies these days. What I would like to have seen is a basis for examining and analysing the ways in which propaganda was and is presented at many levels within a society, to help develop an understanding of why it worked then and why it is still working now.

To make this change really would have only entailed providing a clearer structure for the film as was the case with *Rosie the Riveter*. Only showing the archival material in original sequences, clearly breaking between each piece of material, and accurately and informatively sourcing each film clip would be a minimum. OK, I agree, it doesn't sound like quite as many laughs per scene, not as much good clean fun, but I think it could be more useful and important in the long run.

So, after all of that you're probably thinking I'm saying don't go and see the film – not at all. As I said at

## REVIEWS

the beginning of this, *The Atomic Cafe* is quite satisfactory within its own context and I think lots of people should bob along to see it. So do go and take your friends. Think about the structure, the content and the propaganda if you've got the time or energy – talk about it afterwards. But I guess nobody should really miss such an opportunity to have a good laugh at some of the old enemy's expense. Watch close for tricky Dick Nixon – and the Russian bear – it's a gem.

*Tim Darling is a printer and process camera operator. He has been a Chain Reaction worker for two years.*

*Looks and Smiles*, directed by Ken Loach, 35 mm, black & white, 107 minutes. Available for non-theatrical sales and hire on video, 16 mm and 35 mm from Oceania Media Network, GPO Box 1391, Sydney, NSW 2001, Tel: (02) 264 3529.

Reviewed by Mary Callaghan

*Looks and Smiles* is an honest, eye-level account of three teenagers' confrontations with life in an heavily industrialised environment which is crippled by unemployment. The location is Sheffield, England, a city that thrived on steel manufacture in the past, but now cannot cope with fluctuations in the economy. School leavers inherit the system's inadequacies. Except for the unique Midlands dialect and regional vernacular the film could be set in many Australian industrial cities.

Director Ken Loach and writer Barry Hines sensitively handle a style of social realism that examines life without being heavy or overtly didactic. They have achieved a harmony between a credible drama that is neither indulgent nor emotionally exploitative, and a scathing documentary that is rich with detail but never obsessive.

Cinematographer Chris Menges consciously simplifies the image, developing an essential, uncluttered view that is in touch with a realist aesthetic. *Looks and Smiles* is effectively photographed in black and white; the form never distracts from the content or provides soft options.

The exceptional clarity and quiet strength of *Looks and Smiles* lies in its concern for ordinary working class people and their situation. The warmth and humanity of Hines, Loach and Menges is expressed in the genuine

respect for people implicit in their work.

Loach stresses the team effort and trust that his work relies on for its credibility, especially when working with inexperienced actors in an 'authentic' situation. The value of that trust is evident in the convincing and moving performances given by the three principal cast members, Grahame Greene (Mick), Carolyn Nicholson (Karen) and Tony Pitts (Allan), all Sheffield locals who had never acted professionally before.

The opening sequence of the film probes disturbingly at society's values and priorities. An army recruitment film is being screened to an audience of school leavers. The immediate question for Mick and Allan is whether the army is a viable solution to unemployment. Lured by financial reward and aggravated by minimal job opportunities, Allan opts for the army. He is sent to Northern Ireland where he finds expression for his frustrations and acceptable employment for his anger.

Mick is keen to be a motor mechanic; one of his few pleasures is working on his second-hand motorbike where he shows both aptitude and perseverance. Disillusioned by his abortive attempts to secure an apprenticeship he leans towards the army as a means of escape. His father is dead-set against it: 'he won't see a son of his a strike breaker'.

At a disco Mick meets Karen and a friendship evolves on a romantic note. Saved from any notion of escapist idealism the relationship is mutually supportive and at times refreshingly clumsy.

Karen works in a shoe shop and lives with her mother in a high-rise commission flat. She is emotionally ravaged by her parents' broken marriage. Her resentment of her mother's new boyfriend and claustrophobic living conditions drive her to run away. Mick pillions Karen down south to see her father. They find that he has made a new life for himself and there is neither physical nor emotional room for Karen.

Life continues very much the same back in Sheffield. Mick skims the surface of petty crime and is still without a job. Allan returns on leave loaded with bravado and stories of war. He describes how a fellow soldier was killed. When Mick asks if they got the person responsible he replies, 'we got some bastard'. Karen is afraid that Allan will win Mick and he will join up, breaking up her relationship with him. For Mick the alternatives in the end remain the same as in the beginning – long-term unemployment or the army.

*Looks and Smiles* is not grim and depressing; it does not whinge or nag. The story is told with warmth, humour and even romance but Loach has no use



From the film *Looks and Smiles*.

for melodramatic resolution. He leaves us with the same questions that Mick, Karen and Allan are struggling to answer, with no more information than they have.

*Mary Callaghan is a Sydney filmmaker who recently directed the film Greetings from Wollongong.*

## Books

*Keeping the Peace: Women's Peace Handbook 1*, edited by Lynne Jones, The Women's Press, London, 162 pages, \$9.50 (soft cover).

Reviewed by Amanda Collinge

'That men must fight and women must weep is the implacable ruling of Fate, so say the pretentious wise and cynics.' (*Keeping the Peace*, p ix).

That women are organising and actively opposing nuclear war on an international scale, is the message of *Keeping the Peace*. Lynne Jones has collected accounts from women involved in the Greenham Common Peace Camp, the American Women for Life on Earth and German, Dutch and Japanese women's groups, in a book which describes the energy and diversity of recent women's campaigns on peace and nuclear-related issues.

The linking of feminist and anti-militarist ideologies is by no means a new phenomenon. In 1915, over 2000 women from all over Europe and the USA met in The Hague to protest against the war. During the 1950s, in response to the cold war and 'atmospheric testing', groups such as Women's Strike For Peace mailed their babies' teeth to USA congressmen to demonstrate the effects of radioactive fallout.

What does seem to be new, though, is the sudden proliferation in the last two years of women's groups acting autonomously on peace-related issues. *Keeping the Peace* is an attempt to document this movement, which involves young women and old, women with

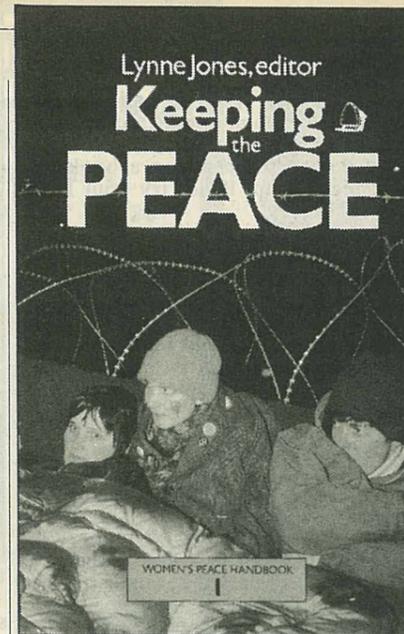
children and without children, women of differing political perspectives. Each chapter is written by a woman, or group of women, from twelve different women's peace initiatives throughout the world. The accounts are sometimes light-hearted, sometimes moving, always informative, and together form a handbook for future women's actions.

There is a feeling in some feminist circles that by working on peace issues, women reinforce the stereotyped role of woman as 'earth mother', conciliator, mop-up of men's troubles – an image which the media exploit. But members of Nottingham Women Oppose the Nuclear Threat (WONT) feel that 'feminism has a particular analysis of the structures and causes of all violence ... Nuclear technology is built on the arrogance and confidence of mastery (over nature as over women) and on the belief in aggression as an heroic quality'. WONT argues that women must be assertive rather than conciliatory peacemakers, and that a female opposition to male values has to be nonviolent.

Likewise, the American Women's Pentagon Action (WPA), claims that only by linking feminism, ecology and anti-militarism, by resisting all forms of violence – to women's bodies, the earth and all living creatures – can life on this planet be saved. In contrast to WONT and WPA, are chapters written by women who felt compelled to act because of their traditional roles. For example, Jini Lavelle, of Oxford Mothers for Nuclear Disarmament, writes, 'We were all mothers – this is still our common bond with a deep fear for our children's futures hanging in a mushroom cloud above our heads.' Her group organised separately because they wanted to feel 'comfortable, accepted and uncriticised'.

The section 'On Common Ground' is written in a fragmented narrative style – snippets of recorded conversations from the Greenham Common Peace Camp, descriptions of the camp, accounts of blockades. Clashes with the police and the courts are included, such as the Newbury Court case in which women were charged with disrupting the peace, and replied, 'We are only keeping the peace.' It is from this incident that the book derives its title. The variety of women camping at Greenham Common, the radicalisation of individuals, and the decision to make the camp women-only make for fascinating reading.

Perhaps the most enlightening of all is the story of the Shibokusa women of Mount Fuji in Japan, who have occupied cottages surrounding a military base for many years now. Despite harassment from right-wing groups, and an eviction carried out by 1000 riot police in 1970, these women have maintained a courageous stand. Most of the Shibokusa



women are in their late 50s or 60s, yet tactics include running across practice shooting fields and building fires in the middle of military drill exercises. Many have been arrested, but tell police nothing. 'We just say we're so old, we can't remember when we were born or who we are.' The Shibokusa women see militarism as violence against the land, and are determined to die rather than move from the cottages. 'We are the strongest women in Japan! And we want other women to be like us!'

The last four chapters of *Keeping the Peace* give practical information for women interested in initiating new actions for peace. Everything from organising an International Women's Day for Disarmament, to a mass lobby of parliament, to setting up a women-only peace camp outside a military base is outlined. Hints on publicity strategies, media contacts and fundraising are followed by ideas for long distance marches, street theatre and other symbolic forms of protest. There is a good discussion of non-violent direct action – affinity groups, non-cooperation with police, the value of arrests to a campaign etc. The final section on resources lists periodicals, films, handbooks, addresses of women's organisations around the world and suggested reading on feminism and anti-militarism.

Overall the book confirms the worth of women organising separately. Autonomous women's groups have created spaces in which strength, confidence, innovations and joy have emerged, and then been added to the general peace movement. The importance of imagination and the use of symbols is common to each protest action. The WPA puppets of rage and mourning at the Pentagon, the sand outside NATO headquarters in Bonn thrown by German Women For Peace, and the woven blockades at

Greenham Common, have all forced the attention of the media and the public consciousness.

What remains is the need to evaluate the effectiveness of these actions. Should women be seeking greater involvement in existing power structures? Or should we be challenging the structures themselves? *Keeping the Peace* opts for change, suggests how to bring about changes, and articulates clearly why they are necessary.

*Amanda Collinge has just got a job working with radio station 4ZZZ in Brisbane.*

*World View 1983, An Economic and Geopolitical Yearbook* (Originally published as *L'Etat du Monde*, edited by Francois Geze, Yves Lacoste and Alfredo Valladao, Maspero, Paris, 1982.) English adaptation edited by Pete Ayrton. Pluto Press, London, 1982, 500 pages, \$14.95 (soft cover).

Reviewed by Keith Redgen

This I think is the second of what promises to be an ongoing annual publication in the *World View* series. The idea and much of the text comes from the Maspero publishing group in France who originally published it under the title *L'Etat du Monde* (The State of the World) and *World View* is an English language adaptation by Pluto Press.

The book is a basic reference for current trends and events in world politics, economics and society, or in the words of the subtitle, 'an economic and geopolitical yearbook'. It is clearly a daunting task to achieve such global aims successfully in a single volume, especially since there is a deliberate policy of avoiding focus on the imperialist centres, providing information and analysis on all parts of the world and filling in the gaps in popular and mainstream information sources.

Clearly a lot of thought has gone into devising the most effective means of presentation. The result is quite successful, if a little uneven. The book is divided into eight separate parts which interlock and are cross-referenced. It opens with a brief chronology of newsmaking events between July 1981 and June 1982, mostly taken from *The Times*, *The New York Times* and *The New Statesman*. The most striking thing about this section is its eclecticism. It seems as if the editors have tried to find an item of news from as many separate days as possible. It works as a reminder of the period of history that the book is concerned with and provides a historical context for what follows.

The next section, 'Strategic Questions', contains substantial articles on general topics. There are nine separate pieces on what are perceived as key issues, giving a background to and ex-

## REVIEWS

planation of contemporary events and politics. Apart from their intrinsic value, the idea is that these essays will prove useful in understanding the shorter pieces on individual countries and regions. The topics covered are imperialism, the crisis of capitalism and finance capital, subversive and revolutionary movements, local areas of tension, nuclear policy, the arms race and disarmament, migration flows around the world, and Eastern Europe. While they are quite short they are adequate as background pieces and have valuable bibliographies.

Fifty-six shorter articles make up the third section, 'Behind the News'. These discuss a wide range of issues of more specific interest and are an uneven combination of the most well known and the more obscure issues and events, from the Falklands/Malvinas dispute to CB radio in the UK. Each of them is well written and informative and many deal with problems and trends that are not widely recognised or understood. The most positive thing about this and the preceding section is their concentration of things of importance that are not dealt with in other accessible publications, and the bibliographies which direct the reader to more extensive sources.

The only problem is editorial selectivity which has left some major gaps. Almost predictably, women and the women's movement are treated in passing, in the context of 'more important' issues with three short pieces on abortion and contraception, and women's struggles in South America and South Africa. Many issues of contemporary importance which should have been dealt with, such as seed patenting, are missing, and amazingly East Timor and FRETILIN are hardly mentioned, and West Irian not at all.

The following two sections, on the major countries and regions of the world are an exhaustive reference source, and the editors have done an excellent job. There is a separate review of each of the 163 countries of the world with longer pieces on 34 major countries. A wealth of statistical information is provided for each country. These sections will be of considerable long-term usefulness for anybody researching or interested in international politics.

Finally there is a directory of research and information listing groups and publications working in the areas covered in the book, mainly in the USA, the UK and Australia. The book closes with a

wide range of statistical tables on the global economy, politics and society. All in all this book should be of great value to just about anybody. If you have fifteen dollars to spend on a book it's worth picking up. If not try your local or school library.

*Keith Redgen spent all of his childhood in Queensland and now lives in Elwood, Victoria.*

**The Ecology of Freedom** by Murray Bookchin, Cheshire Books, Palo Alto, California, 1982, 385 pages, \$12.50 (soft cover).

Reviewed by Peter Ellieffe

Murray Bookchin is an American anarchist who has been writing on social and environmental issues for more than twenty years. This book is perhaps a culmination of his work, sophisticated polemic on behalf of an ecological society, that is, one free of both the domination of human beings and of nature.

The emphasis on freedom has been the distinguishing mark of anarchists. In contrast marxists have often been preoccupied with problems of social justice or equality, which Bookchin argues has often led radicals into an acceptance, and even creation, of powerful state and party structures.

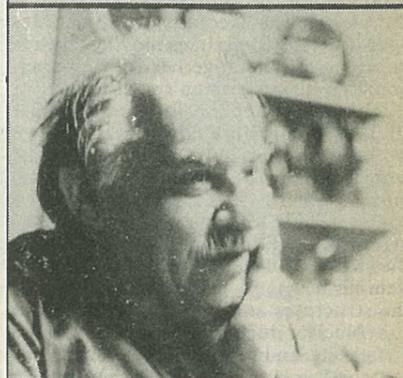
The anarchist critique of domination also has the advantage that it ties up with the object of radical ecological thinkers: the domination of nature. Bookchin argues that the connection exists historically. Early societies apparently existed without institutionalised hierarchy. For example Eskimo tribes respected children as much as adults, and patriarchy was often unheard-of in these 'organic' societies. *The Ecology of Freedom* attempts to reconstruct domination's emergence.

According to Bookchin, the first hierarchies began when the old attempted to gain the allegiance of the young (in bad times the old were sometimes left to fend for themselves). They secured their position by mystifying the world; they became the first shamans and witches. Thus, the ideology of nature as dangerous, as requiring domination, was linked to the growth of hierarchy, and this conception has been with us ever since.

This ideology also entailed a sharp distinction between human society and 'nature', a cleavage which has become extreme in our time. Aristotle's philosophy reflects an age when the concept of technics was bound up with ethical and political questions. *Techné* was potential, a coming into being; it was an interaction between 'man' and nature which concerned the inner nature of the object and the appropriate means of its modification for human use.

Technology today is simply a system

## The Ecology of FREEDOM



by which we bend nature to our own Bookchin traces the growth of the state as a parallel to the growth of the ideological and technical apparatus required to subdue nature. Bureaucracy is a form of social technology, a system of techniques of social domination. If in the twentieth century we have reached unprecedented exploitation of both human and natural 'resources', this is not by chance.

In this book the author's project of an ecological society is outlined. The ideals which would be manifested in such a society would be drawn partly from awareness of the nature of organic societies, but obviously we cannot simply return to a 'state of nature', and not only because such societies have defects from the modern point of view.

Ecological society would look to the character of basic human relationships such as the mother-child relationship, where love and security is given without recourse to a 'contract' ensuring an equal exchange of emotion. Even in our perverse society such relationships can take place, and Bookchin suggests that an awareness of this can be the inspiration for the leaps of imagination required to create an ecological society.

'If we cannot be certain that the human estate will advance, we do have the opportunity to choose between utopistic freedom and social immolation.' *The Ecology of Freedom* is an unashamedly utopian book, apparently grounded on enormous research. For those looking for a coherent ecological theory, Bookchin certainly has some valuable insights.

ends, or more precisely, to the ends of our bosses. Similarly, 'reason' has been largely devalued, according to Bookchin, to mere technological rationality. This fact leads some radicals (for example Dada, the Sex Pistols, and other romantics) to reject 'the project of reason' out of hand.

*Peter Ellieffe is a student who works with the Chain Reaction collective in Sydney.*

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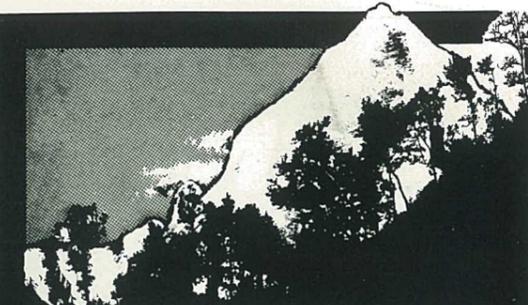
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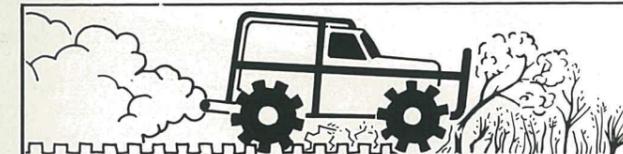
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# WOMENS REACTION



Back in the winter of 1981 Chain Reaction ran a backstage item entitled **WOMEN'S REACTION**. That article called for more women to become involved in Chain Reaction. It had an excellent response - three women became involved because of it: Jill Taylor, Judy McDougall in Melbourne and Trish Luker in Sydney.

And as these and other women have worked as part of the Chain Reaction Collective over the last two years the representation of women in both graphics and content in the magazine has increased. To maintain and improve this situation further we need more women to become involved in its production.

Chain Reaction depends on volunteer workers doing a range of jobs such as writing, research, editing, illustration, layout, distribution and promotion. Volunteer workers are part of the Chain Reaction Collective which runs the magazine.

Please contact in Melbourne: Tel: 635995; Rm 14, Flr 4, 37 Swanston St, Melbourne 3000.  
Please contact in Sydney: Tel: 2113953; c/- Friends of the Earth, 787 George St, Sydney 2000.