

letstalk

Information Bulletin of the Richmond Valley Local Energy Transfer System JUL/AUG.94.

EDITORIAL

I would not call the first quarterly LETS trading day a roaring success but it was not a total failure either as the few members present managed to generate about L300 worth of trading. That's not bad for just a handful of people exchanging things like cotton pillows, coffee trees, hand-made photographic post-cards or mango chutney. On that day, some yearly subscriptions were paid and a solicitor joined RIVLETS. The entertainment was great, the weather was beautiful and the organiser did not charge us a stall fee.

The next LETS trading day is on July 31st which also happens to be the day for the Annual General Meeting. The week-end before, all NSW LETSsystems are converging on Camden for the first state conference which I will attend as the RIVLETS representative. I'll be reporting on it at the AGM.

Those of you who are also members of the NRMA would know by now that this service organisation is planning to give away two billion dollars to its members in lots of \$500 shares. From a LETS point of view, this is a commendable decision since the NRMA consistently made profits that it could not spend.

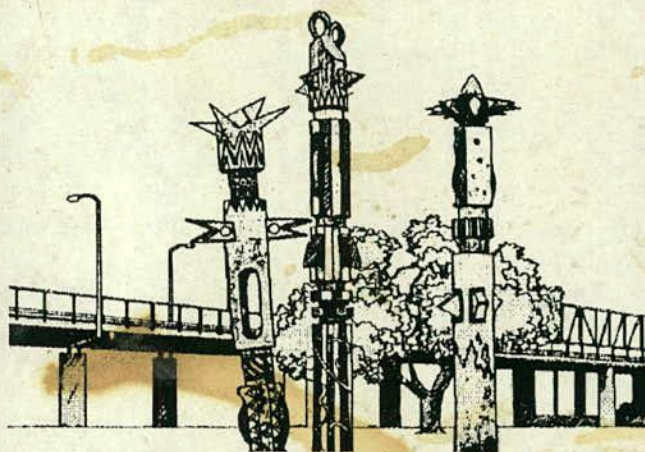
If RIVLETS did the same thing (give L500 to every trading member) a sizeable amount of the local currency would be available for immediate use to boost trading. Of course, this is only a half-baked idea that flies in the face of many commonly held views about money but RIVLETS is not top of the charts for trading volume so any suggestion for addressing that issue would be more than welcome. That's my view. What's yours?

The next issue of LETSTALK will be bigger as it will feature the new directory, so pay your subs and indicate any changes in your listings before the end of August. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Jamil Rahal

RIVLETS A.G.M.
SUNDAY 31.7.94
Lismore Worker's Club 6 pm

2ND QUARTERLY LETS TRADING DAY



LISMORE HERITAGE PARK MARKET SUNDAY 31 JULY

The Rivlets office will have an info stall at this event. All members are welcome to join in, by bringing any goods they would like to trade, skills they would like to display or requests they would like to advertise. See you there!

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COMPUTER TIME & LAYOUT SUPPORT
Steve Cooke / North Coast Market Management

Many thanks to all contributors. Deadline for next edition; 31 August 94.

Manager's Report: JULY / AUGUST 1994

July/August promises to be a time of big changes for the LETS office. The major one being a move from our present rooms at the Life Resources Exchange, where we have been happily housed for close to four years. Sadly the LRE is closing its doors on the 14th of August and LETS will be following suit. The other possible big change is that we may move our office out of Lismore. This depends on the availability of a suitable space in Lismore at an affordable rent.

A suitable space could be available in the Channon area which would suit some of our present workers. Of course our preference is to remain in Lismore where we are accessible to a greater number of members. We are presently checking out various ideas for setting up a new office or sharing a space with another group/organisation. Any suggestions, ideas or offers of suitable would be welcome.

Our minimum needs are a space large enough for a couple of desks and a filing cabinet (say 3m x 4m) to be used two days a week with rent not exceeding \$30/week. Preferred attributes are phone connection, available Thursday and Friday, within walking distance

of Lismore shopping centre, space about 6m x 4m, rent payable in all or part Locals.

You may have noticed the absence of a "Skills and Services" update in the last newsletter. The reason for this is that the directory has been changed to include members surnames. This has effectively meant a change to every entry in the skills file. The Skills Update function of our program would therefore reproduce the whole skills file. The update is again absent from the newsletter for the same reason, however your next newsletter will include a full updated directory. Don't forget, you will only be included in the new directory if your \$5 annual subscription has been paid. You are also asked to confirm or update existing skills listings when you pay your subs. If you have paid your 94/95 subs you should find your new membership card enclosed. If not ring us on 222 776.

Welcome back to Carol Fickling who is now working alternate Thursday afternoons, and to Jill McCaull on Thursday mornings.

Happy Trading! Ray.

David Suzuki's latest warning

In his latest book *Time to Change*, environmentalist David Suzuki does some finger-pointing and identifies systems that are responsible for our ecocrisis. He then follows up with some solutions.

The following text is an extract from a discussion with Premila Mohanlall, courtesy of the *Open Road* magazine (February 1994).

Often big corporations and captains of industry have been taken to task for environmental problems. But there is a bigger issue at hand.

Captains of industry play the game as the game is defined. The problem is that right now the game is to make money, and making money is the core of the economic system that we have bought into. The economic system that we have right now is set up to absolutely destroy the planet, and so long as we are plugged into that system any advances made in adopting environmentally friendly structures and practices will make little impact.

When you look at an economics text book, within the first five pages there will be a diagram of the economy with labour, raw materials, capital etc linked up with arrows. By manipulating the arrows you should be able to control the economy. But nowhere is any reference made to the environment- air, earth, water and other living things. If you ask an economist why, he dismisses

them as externalities.

The problem is that the environment is perceived as one narrow sliver in the totality of human activity. If you look at government, the major portfolios all have to do with industry, development, trade and finance. Economics is the dominant thing, and environment is an insignificant portfolio.

Economics are also designed to serve people and communities. But a weird thing is happening right now. It is as if the economy has become the priority, and if it starts to slide, the politicians tell us: "You have to make sacrifices so the economy can turn around!"

So suddenly the economy- which in the first place was set up to serve people and communities- has become a monster that we are all trying to serve and feed.

The result is that companies around the world continue to grow but jobs and human lives are not benefiting from it. We hear this buzzword "downsizing". The reason companies are downsizing is not so that people can survive but so that the company and the economy becomes more productive and profitable. The message that comes across is: people don't count. We'll fire people to maximise profits!

I think we have come to this crazy

point of equating progress with the acquisition of material goods and with whatever is the newest and latest. There is this tyranny of modernity that anything modern is good and anything old is bad. It is as if we have disconnected ourselves from the accumulation of knowledge and wisdom and now the only thing that matters is material wealth.

The fact is that when you look at the distribution of wealth in the world, about 85 per cent is owned by 20 percent of the world's population- that is the rich countries such as North America, Europe, Japan and Australia. We also use 80 percent of the world's resources and cause an equal amount of pollution. If the top one fifth of the world causes so much destruction, there must definitely be merit in the way the middle three-fifth live. They are the majority who live at a level where the ownership of a private car is beyond their means, so they use public transport and rely on their local community for their food and other supplies

Living this way, which is the way the majority of human beings live on earth, is the way that the extreme ends (the rich and the poor) must go. In fact, we have to take a leaf out of their book. We have to focus on local communities and become more self sufficient and self reliant. The minute you do this you reduce damage to the environment.

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BANK ROBIN HOOD EMPTY FAT ACCOUNTS TO LEND TO THE POOR!

The revolt started at the counter of a small country branch of the Credit Lyonnais in France. One morning, the local garagist came in to complain: "If I cannot manage to somehow borrow fifty thousand dollars, I will end up bankrupt very soon". Another day it was a couple inquiring about a home loan. The branch manager, a man in his mid-fifties, decided to help them, believing that the the banking system was full of inefficiencies. Let us call him *The Bank Robin Hood* as the press did. To reach his self-made

definition of justice, Robin decided to turn around ordinary banking logic. Is it absolutely necessary to only lend to people with collaterals or some proof that they are able to repay their debt? Why only them? Couldn't we trust the enthusiasm of those who are not so well off?

According to his wife, the unfortunate branch manager could never say no. On the other hand, he was able to muster an uncanny sense of initiative. He decided, without as much as one vote, to put in place a new social tax. His method? Siphoning the fattest accounts in his branch to assist his needy customers. A

sort of wealth redistribution!

This lasted three years until someone dobbed him in last February. In court Robin attempts to explain: "I know it seems unbelievable! I can't get over it myself. I must have lost my marbles." He was condemned to eighteen months jail and a \$25,000 fine, although the sentence was suspended due to extenuating circumstances (he never pocketed a cent). When fired from his bank, he joined a community organisation set up to rehabilitate adults in distress. His new boss is delighted: "He loves to help people!" Conclusion: "Don't miss your calling in life!"

