

Its establishment filled a vacuum. The availability of child care and pre-school facilities in the area has increased contact and communication between children and parents in sometimes isolated situations.

Several people from the farm are employed in the pre-school.

An annexe to the pre-school has been planned for the farm, as an ongoing educational facility for people in the immediate area, giving greater accessibility and reducing the need for transport for young children.

Two older children in the community travel to a school co-operative run by parents in Lismore, requiring a high commitment from parents involved. This has been beneficial for these children, highlighting the needs of different age groups and the unfortunately narrow age range among children on the farm.

Such a community obviously requires time and a great deal of energy to become established.

As the community becomes more consolidated greater focus is directed to livelihood and involvement in the community at large.

People support themselves in a variety of ways.

A pottery and kiln has been built and provides income for a family with three children and partially supports a single mother of two.

Five people from the farm were initially part of a larger group involved in the establishment of a health and bulk food store in Lismore. This now provides a livelihood for ten people, three of whom live in the community.

Several people are supported by importing cloth and selling clothes at local markets as well as producing massage oils and skin creams for a wide distribution.

Building and carpentry skills offer an irregular livelihood for others.

Work can be found locally and also further afield, for example six people from the community constructed a mud brick home near Manilla.

Several women receive supporting mother's benefits and a family is supported by unem-

Drawing closer to day of re-appraisal

ployment benefits while attempting to establish a livelihood with art work.

The farm is supported by weekly contributions of \$22 per person which covers general farm expenditure and maintenance and basic food costs, with households buying additional personal requirements.

People from other communities in the area are active in the fields of nursing, education, psychiatry and public service, still deeply connected with the mainstream society.

Birth and Beyond, a group in nearby Nimbin, has been growing for some years. It was initiated by a trained mid-wife, who together with several assistants, attends home births in the district.

The group, meeting weekly, has become a valuable support system during and after pregnancy with a trained nursing sister also in attendance.

There has been growing concern among parents and friends of the continued use of toxic chemicals in spraying of weed infestations, often adjacent to water supply systems and the possible connection with birth defects in the area.

Meditation provides the spiritual focus of the community.

The nearby Forest Meditation Centre, built together with people from the surrounding community, offers anyone interested the peace of the forest.

Here group retreats are conducted in silence several times a year, providing a time for reflection and contemplation.

The farm's involvement with social action and the desire for the establishment of more far sighted policies such as a sane re-afforestation

programme were born out of the conflict over the proposed logging of the nearby Terania Creek rain-forest.

The dispute produced a deep schism in the community, particularly with many long time residents, dairy farmers in more abundant times, who are now bitter at the influx of young strangers and their families into their countryside.

While communication with some of the more established residents of the area remains rare, the tensions crystallised by the focus on Terania Creek created further discussion.

A re-afforestation seminar brought together logging interests, conservationists, forestry department and government personnel and served to bring attention to the urgent need for a vast tree planting programme.

Discussion included the need for restoring marginal, weed infested land, still frequently sprayed with the toxic chemicals, 24D and 2245T, by planting trees to prevent further erosion and policies to encourage land holders to reafforest unproductive lands.

The local tensions, breeding long after the bulldozer, police and conservationists had left Terania Creek, underscored an unpleasant sense of living as an ethnic minority, disapproved of and disparagingly dismissed as 'hippies' because of a concern at the treatment of our Earth.

It is easy for us all to view with suspicion that which is unfamiliar, yet it seems we are swiftly approaching "the latter times", when man is destroying his environment so irrevocably that as human beings of conscience we must demand a re-appraisal.

*Richard St. Barbe Barker — My Life, My Trees. Findhorn Publications.

*E.F. Schumacher — Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered. Abacus.

Letter
to the
Editor...

Ideal time — clean-up

Sir — In a recent issue of the Namoi Valley Independent, Gunnedah, I noticed a picture of the sadly-depleted water level at Keepit Dam.

What really caught my eye was the fact that the receding waterline has laid bare — perhaps for the first time in more than a decade — probably hundreds of dead trees, both standing and fallen.

Wouldn't this present the Water Resources Commission with a golden opportunity to get rid of all that unwanted timber?

They should have got rid of it in the first place, as was done in the case of the Hume reservoir, near Aibury, and a number of other storages.

The dead trees must surely be a hazard to navigation as the water level falls.

Removal would at least be a move for safety.

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