

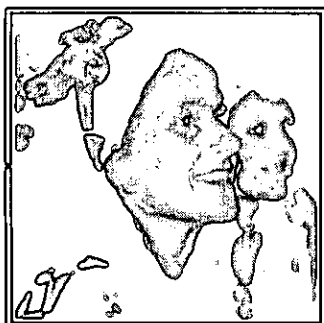
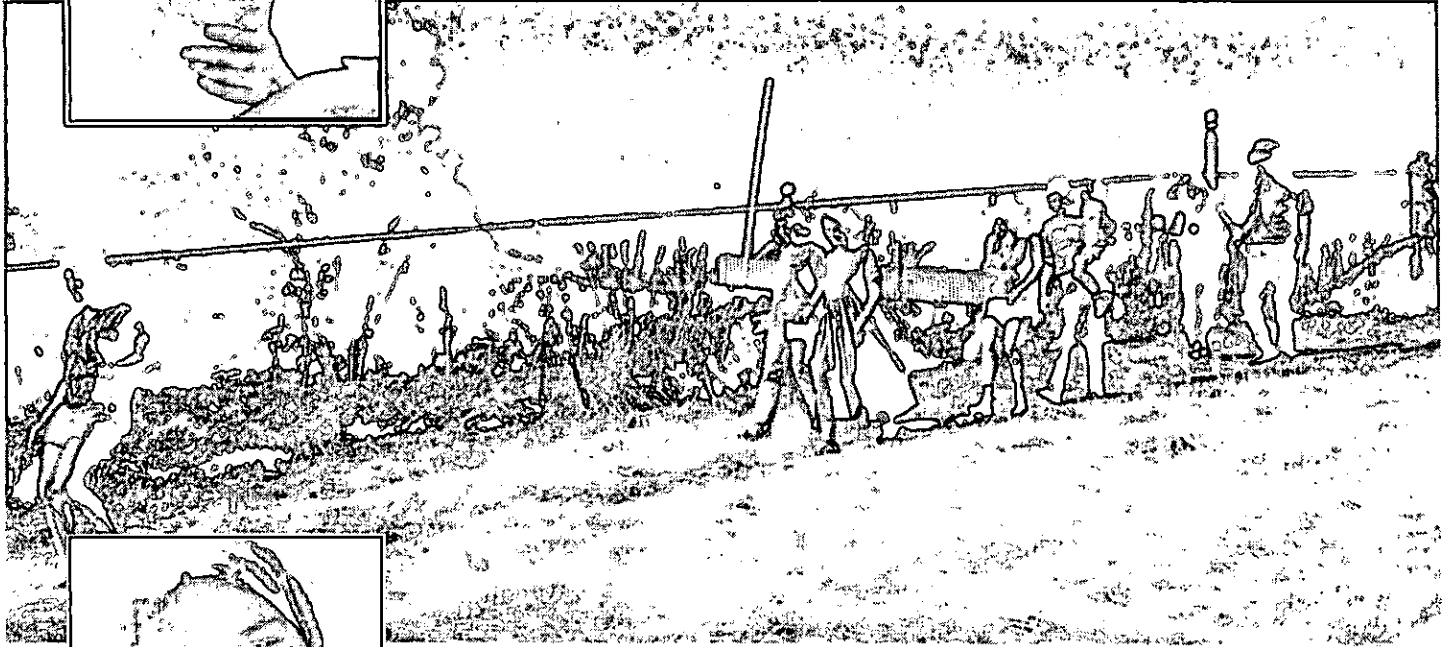
# Community Interlink

VOLUME 1 No. 1 October 1997

\$2.00



Celebrating  
Intentional  
Community



Commonground  
January 3rd - 5th, 1997

# Welcome to Community Interlink

*Community Interlink* Newsletter is a child of the Communities Gathering at Commonground in January. This, the pilot of a proposed first edition was helped into the world, and given its name, by Gloria Constine (Tuntable Falls) and Jan Tilden (Manduka)

Gloria called to ask me to write an introduction piece for this newsletter and I've decided to do it in the form of a blessing on the venture. Of course, as the giver of a blessing (like a tiresome old uncle making a speech at a christening party) I claim a licence to say almost anything I like.

We blessing givers often find it convenient to begin with an anecdote. This one is from the gathering:

*During the final afternoon, I talked with a young woman. She said she had learned a lot from her experience, but thought not all of what she had seen and heard was relevant to her, and was dismayed that so many important issues - like money, power, work and 'equity' had been as good as ignored during the organised sessions. She also asked me why so many comfortable, middle-aged men were offering her so many hugs, while paying so little attention to what she was trying to say. I said, with scant conviction that it WAS supposed to be a celebration, and that to many of my generation, a hug was as free of agenda as a handshake. - nothing to do with her being female, young, and good looking. Then, a man of forty- something interrupted us to say 'farewell'. He spoke mostly to me, shook my hand, and threw his arms around her.*

This incident encapsulates the very small sum of my reservations about the gathering, and sets the tone for my blessing on this newsletter. At Commonground, I basked in the Joy of fellowship with wise and loving people. Yet the safe atmosphere, fostered with such skill, may have made it *more*, rather than *less*, difficult for some to speak out on some issues - for no one wants to spoil a party.

I hope *Community Interlink* carries on the celebration, but it must also face the truth that Intentional Community is difficult, and deal with the often hidden, 'dirty', issues - like money and power. It must also address its dangers for the human psyche as we 'revolutionaries by lifestyle' dance on the narrow line where visions and aspirations meet social, economic and psychological 'realities'; as we try to deal in hope but often buy despair; as we struggle endlessly to reconcile our personal desires with the group need, and the needs of others.

## Here's a toast to *Community Interlink* Newsletter.

May *Community Interlink* show, with good humour and in full charity, that intentional Community nurtures human folly, as well as human wisdom; that wisdom like folly, takes many forms; and that each contains the other.

May it trawl the wisdom of its readership for innovative ways to address the challenges, issues and problems of Intentional Community. May it be a cradle for new ideas as well as the much loved and in truth, often tired old ones; the heterodox, and the 'unacceptable' - even the plain old 'wrong'. And let it make available the odd corner (I mean now and then) for the frankly mad.

May its pages offer more than easy good tidings. May it be this newsletter's virtue to admit that communities also harbour human vices - often cloaked and masked by such as piety, and high-mindedness. That they are places where people often behave badly; where injustice, exploitation, unfairness and cruelty fester, and the malignancies of hubris, hypocrisy, envy and selfishness thrive.

May *Community Interlink* have no 'mission statement' other than to foster: interest in, and knowledge of, Intentional Community.

May each number contain the maximum possible variety of discussion and information, rather than concentrating 'in depth' on one topic per issue. May its columns thus form many slender threads in the tapestry of community development.

May *Community Interlink* give more space to asking questions, and less to providing answers - to an 'understanding of confusion', rather than a 'confusion of understanding'.

May it embrace, but never be controlled by: moralisers, ideologues, new-age mystics, environmental fundamentalists, vegetarians, process freaks, (or outcome addicts) 'priests' and other ritualists, tipi dwellers, feminists, eco-village promoters bio-dynamicists, gay activists, blokes, anarchists or academics.

May it give lots of space to practical matters, celebrate physical work, and give due honour to the often silent people who do more than their share of labour in some communities.

May it never forget that the most important measure of Intentional Community is: to what extent is it a counter-culture?

May its editorial functions be as a carnival - a movable festival. Let the editors help those who are less confident with the written word to have their say. Let them be fickle in their choice of contributors and topics and wary of imposing standards of what is or is not, 'good' writing. Let them devote heaps of space for poems, jokes, stories, and pictures.

Let them not be forced, by a shortage of contributions from people at the barricades, into overburdening their columns with the potted theses, or learned musings, of anthropologists, psychologists and historians.

Let them enjoy themselves, indulge their passions and quirks, and let them be paid at least a little.

I hope *Community Interlink* will grow into a magazine circulated everywhere; that celebrity minds will clamour (in vain?) for space in its columns; that it gets published on the Internet, that mainstream organs wilt before its challenge. But please, oh please, however successful it may become, let it remain accessible to, and part of the community of its readership.

I ask you to fill your chosen vessel as full as you like with whatever you wish to drink, give loving thanks to Gloria and Jan, and wish *Community Interlink* all our best for a long, creative life.

*Bill Smale, Mandala Community Pty, Ltd.*

# Celebrating Intentional Community

Between January 3 and January 5 this year representatives of about 25 intentional communities from around Australia gathered to share experiences, enjoy the best of company and come up with some good ideas (no problem there!). After two days together exploring the nitty gritty issues of Australian intentional community life in the late '90s, most of these good ideas focussed on how we (and hopefully other communities not present) could work together for mutual benefit and for the benefit of our movement as a whole.

Hosted by the "Fruitsalad Collective" (a group of Victorian communities already co-operating for mutual benefit), the meeting was held at Common Ground in Scymour about 100 kilometres north of Melbourne.

People came from across the continent and even overseas, in all about 80 of us who were either members of communities or people seriously exploring the process of setting up a community.



Enjoying the morning circle

The event was superbly organised. Plenty of thought had gone into making this gathering something more creative than your average conference. For example, instead of the usual (and often tedious) "getting to know you" session, where everyone sits in a circle and takes their turn to say who they are and why they came, each community did some sort of skit or other performance to introduce itself and entertain those assembled. Some of these were masterpieces and very funny.

Pre-arranged workshops followed. Some of the Topics: Community Glue, Issues of Succession, Collaborative Decision Making, Making Meetings Marvellous, Group Dynamics, Creative Eco-

nomics, Sex and Sexuality in Intentional Communities.

On the last day small groups dealt with issues arising from the various workshops. There was a flurry of butcher's paper and time keeping (some things never change). Proposals were floored (rather than tabled). Different people took responsibility for carrying out various tasks. A report from these issues groups is included later in this publication.

A concert on the last night gave the more outgoing people at the gathering (who seemed to be the majority) another chance to be entertaining.

Apart from all this organised jolly-good-fun there was plenty of opportunity for informal gathering in meal breaks and in the evenings.

To summarise: Venue - Superb; Food - Great; Entertainment -



Getting serious with butcher's paper on the last day

heaps; Talks - very harmonious and constructive; Outcomes - this newsletter and much much more (to be reported herein); Common Ground - great mob. Many thanks to you all and the rest of the Fruitsalad Collective. ☺



Plenty of good food and interesting company

# INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY GATHERING

## 'Where to from Here' Workshop Minutes - Seymour, Jan 5th, 1997

**Present:** Roughly 76 people from various communities

**Butcher-Sheet collator:** Alikki

NB. There were seven working groups concentrating on specific issues that were collectively identified:

- i) Community Exchange Programs
- ii) Promotions
- iii) Federation of Co-ops
- iv) Magazine/Newsletter
- v) Next Gathering
- vi) Young Bloods
- vii) Education & Training
- viii) Directory/Database

### I) Community Exchange Programs Sub-group proposals:

a) Short term: to set up a Directory like WWOOF to facilitate exchanges between intentional communities. Each community can establish its own criteria with an outline of credentials/ contributions required. A set fee for entry into the program would need to be devised.

b) Long term: to establish a Residential Program possibly with a minimum stay of 3 months and temporary community member status (ie. rights and responsibilities). Also a list of offers and requests would need to be set up to circulate.

**Organiser & Contact Persons:** - **Bridget Jordan** from Holy Goat Ranch, - **Richard Barcham** from Koorool Ranch

### II) Promotions Sub-group (Cathy, Roy, Judith, Bill Metcalf):

Aim is to promote the concept of intentional communities using examples from existing communities. Two strategies devised:

#### a) Short term approach:

- **Judith Power** to put together a press release re: this gathering which will be disseminated to all communities encouraging them to distribute this information to the local media.
- **Encourage each community to**
  - create videos of their community and then organise a videotape network (ie., providing a listing of names, availability, etc).
  - do reviews of current literature focusing on I.C. which could then be sent to the newsletter/magazine collective to publish.
  - develop display material which could be used as information stands at current festivals/gatherings.
  - keep archives of their own stories.
  - hold open days.

• **Cath** to ask communities to consider updating information re: their experiences with the WWOOF program and then circulate to each other as well as encouraging those communities not yet involved.

#### b) Long term approach:

- To work towards an Expo.
- Make more contact with main-stream media through TV., radio, and literature.
- Encourage the use of video for promotion/education and provide to schools, education centres, libraries

**Organiser and Contact Person:** **Judith Power** from Feral Wymyn.

### III) Federation of Co-operatives Sub-group aims:

- a) To develop a cohesive voice/forum for promotion and support

of egalitarian communities through a regional/national framework;

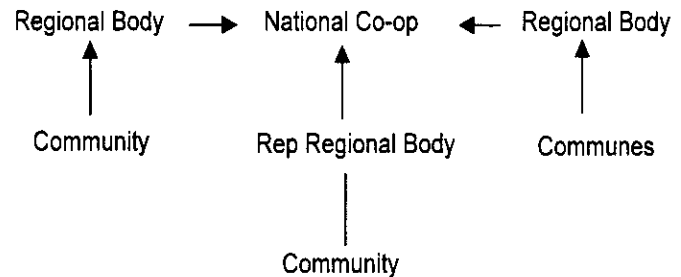
b) To research financial options for developing such a framework;

c) To research legislative options/precedents for models (ie., local, state and federal governments);

d) To coordinate research about communities and disseminate through a Directory and Newsletter;

e) To lobby at a National, State, Local and International level on a collective basis sharing resources/information - hence develop a resource centre.

### Possible structure of this organisation:



### Need to:

- Set up regional bodies with commitment;
- National Co-op;
- Data base;
- Funding from regional bodies for National Co-op;
- Take deposits for loan fund to lend to communities;
- Research state co-op laws to find best ways for depositing and loaning of money.

From the general group certain people volunteered to be identified as possible regional representatives:

- Richard Barcham (Koorool) for Stn N.S.W.
- Enid Conochie (The Wolery) for W.A.
- Ashley Campbell (Seli Hoo) for SA.
- Simon Clough (Dharmananda) for Nth East N.S.W.
- Gary Blisner (Manduka) for Qld.
- Fruitsalad Network for Vic.

### IV) Magazine/ Newsletter Sub Group (See page 10)

**V) Next Gathering Discussion Group Report** (written by Sean from Moora Moora):

The discussion group consisted of Nick from Mulkirri; Jill from Ruach; Helen from Seli-Hoo; Rob from Rainforest House and Sean.

The group began with a general discussion of the value of gatherings similar to the one they were participating in. All members of the group agreed that the current gathering had been successful and a lot of this success was due to its focus on the exchange of ideas and experiences between members of existing communities.

The following options were identified as worth exploring in more detail:

1. A recurring National Intentional Communities Gathering.
2. State or Regional Gatherings.
3. Participation in other festivals and alternative lifestyle events.

### 1. A recurring National Gathering

It would be desirable to encourage the evolution of a recurring

National Gathering of members of Intentional Communities.

The National Gathering should be aimed at members of established intentional communities and should be seen as an opportunity to celebrate community as well as to provide formal and informal opportunities to exchange ideas and experiences.

The gathering should not be continually held at one location but should move about the country on a regional basis depending on where a regional group of communities can gather the resources and enthusiasm to host a National Gathering.

To provide time for participants to wind down from one gathering and disseminate their experiences and for the organisers of the next gathering to prepare and build momentum it is suggested that National Gatherings should be held at approximately two-year intervals.

Possible regions identified at this gathering are: Victoria, South-East NSW, North-East NSW, Southern Qld, South-West W.A. and Sth Australia.

## **2. State or Regional Gatherings**

The same reasons as those given above could be used in support of the organisation of gatherings of communities on a State or regional basis.

These meetings could be of special significance if a formal National organisation or network of intentional communities is established. State or regional gatherings could then play a role in the development of input and feedback to any national 'organisation'.

If a two-year cycle is adopted for National Gatherings, the intermediate year between National Gatherings could be an appropriate time for holding state or regional gatherings.

## **3. Participation of other festivals/events**

As mentioned above the discussion group felt that National and Regional Gatherings would be of most benefit and interest if they are aimed at members of established intentional communities. This gathering did have valuable input from the small number of participants who were seeking to join or establish new communities. The group felt that to widen the scope of such gatherings to meet the needs of large numbers of interested people would weaken their value to existing communities and their members.

However, in every state and almost every region there are broader festivals, exhibitions and events aimed at an audience of people interested in 'alternative lifestyles'. Examples of these are the Confests held each year in Victoria and Sthn NSW, music festivals, alternative farming expositions and so on. These events could provide good venues for the Intentional Community movement to make contact with prospective new members and to promote its ideas. Regional groupings of communities and/or individual communities could promote themselves and the Intentional Community movement by participating in these events.

## **Detailed discussion of a next National Gathering.**

Recommendation: That the next National Gathering of Intentional Communities be held some time during the period from Spring 1998 to Autumn 1999. This period fits in with the notion of a two-year cycle between gatherings but provides flexibility to allow for climate and other considerations in the host region.

In order for this to take place a single community or a regional grouping of communities has to offer themselves as hosts for the next gathering. This needs to be done as early as possible to allow for time to organise, etc.

A two-stage process has been identified by the group as a possible way for the transition to be made from the current host - The Fruit Salad Network (Vic) - to the next host.

### **Stage 1 - To be completed by 1st November 1997**

The aim of this stage is to recruit hosts for the next gathering and establish the date and venue if possible. An attempt to establish a fund to help the next hosts begin their organisational efforts will be made. It is suggested that this stage be carried out by the Fruit Salad Network as the hosts of the current gathering.

### **Details of stage 1:**

Seek an offering from a community or regional grouping of communities to organise and host the next gathering.

Establish with the new hosts a date and venue for the next gathering.

Use existing mailing lists and the proposed new communities network to seek feedback and expressions of interest.

Try and establish a seed fund of \$500 to hand over to the new hosts. This fund is to help with the initial stages of organisation. It could be accumulated by donation or by a small voluntary levy on each member of each intentional community.

Fruit Salad Network to prepare a summary report of their experiences in hosting the current gathering and a draft plan for the organisation of the next gathering. These to be passed on to potential hosts of the next gathering.

Stage 1 to be carried out by the Fruit Salad Network and completed by 1st November, 1997. An estimated budget of \$100 will be required - hopefully from proceeds of the first gathering.

### **Stage 2 - To be completed by the end of Autumn 1999 (Approx).**

The aim of this stage is to organise and host the next gathering.

In December 1997 the Fruit Salad Network will 'hand over' to the next hosts. Hopefully a seed fund of approximately \$500 will be in place. A summary of the Fruit Salad Network's own experience and a draft working plan will be handed over to the new hosts.

Stage 2 to be carried out by the hosts of the next gathering and completed at the end of the next gathering.

**VI) Involving Young Blood Discussion** ( written by Ed from Commonground) :

**Present** Gary, Carl, Andy, Ed.

### **Need**

The Australian Communities Movement - (ACM)\* - needs to involve Young Blood for the movement to be sustainable and to prosper. It is based on our belief in 'complementarity' that communities will be most viable when young blood and the elders can work collaboratively through the pooling of their respective gifts.

\* There is no agreed upon name yet, so I use one I like for the interim, we are open to suggestions.- Ed!

### **Aim**

To promote the involvement of Young Blood within the ACM.

Objective: To achieve this aim through representation on and effective power within the ACM. To ensure that the young blood has input into ACM - not just a 'tokenistic' adjunct.

### **The Offer**

This objective could be achieved through;

- canvassing what young bloods want, what their hopes and issues are by asking them what would induce them to become involved in particular communities and the ACM
- guaranteed number of places on a national Federation
- focus on needs and wishes of young bloods at a regional level - which can feed into a national gathering
- national gathering for young bloods
- offer training workshops on the issues involved in community living and the skills required - regionally and via a national gathering
- support communities to develop internships so that they can bring young bloods in at various life stages
- directory of communities who offer internships

**Definition of young blood** \*The term 'young blood' is intended to cover the following people:

- children and youth living on communities
- young adults living on communities and those interested in doing so
- adults up to about 35 with young families living on communities and those interested in doing so. ☺







# FINANCIAL & LEGAL DISCUSSION:

NOTES FROM MEETING 03/01/97

## ISSUES

- Developing collaborative business ventures
- Mortgages unattainable for co-operatively owned land thus posing a barrier to new members
- Setting up a community - town planning law and how it applies to multiple structures on single titles, collaborative equity
- Emotional difficulties with income/equity differences
- Legal protection- honorarium
- Asset rich but not realising potential to pursue business ventures
- Succession
- Co-operatives are paternalistic (legally speaking)
- Tax interface - manipulating legal structures to minimise tax and auditing, fringe benefits tax.

## SETTING UP

### What do we want a legal entity to do?

- Non-compulsory audit, low tax, low charges
- Protection for participants (equitable returns for paid and unpaid workers)
- Flexibility for changing circumstances
- Flexibility in creating a business within the legal entity
- Capacity to deal with new/exiting members
- Remuneration for workers in a business
- Equity decision-making
- Capitalisation of ventures
- Effective organisational dynamics
- Separately consider settlement and business needs
- Legal entity needs to work for objectives of community
- Limited number of objectives that are achievable
- Do groundwork before consulting a solicitor/ accountant
- Acknowledge and accommodate our needs for economic security.

## SUSTAINING ENTITY - LEGALLY, FINANCIALLY & EMOTIONALLY

- Emotional issues - sharing, re-evaluation, resolution sessions, workshops - communication skills, decision making
- How new and exiting members affect the dynamics (the smaller you are the bigger the issues)
- Avoid dilution of visions by members withdrawing power and support (often by non-decision)
- Actively maintain and develop a radical culture by social interactions (holidaying together, community exchanges) or by doing nothing thus stagnating

- Vision sessions - to investigate objectives (what do we want to do together?)
- Come to intentional community gatherings for exchange and support of ideas
- Power - addressing, understanding, build collaborative solutions
- Conflict - application of structure / techniques, continual revision.

## COLLECTIVE BUSINESS VENTURES

- Recognising that the group is in business with responsibilities and commitments
  - subsidiary business of co-operative or main legal entity
  - establishment of power relations
  - flexible arrangements that are assessed and reassessed (trust an important component)

- Individual enterprise where fees are paid to the collective

- ensuring collapse of business venture does not jeopardise community
- exploring different structures
- Partnerships
  - subsidiary ledger system
  - income based on hours worked
  - flexible tax liability
  - freedom of design

## FOLLOW-UPS

- Frequently asked questions before establishing a legal entity

- home page on the internet
- booklet/guidelines (Robert Tapp from Crystal Waters, Queensland)

- Lending organisation

- intentional community credit unions
- asset bank (asset-rich co-ops assisting new co-ops financially)

- Asset pooling (sharing plant and building equipment)

- Visitors network.

## EVALUATION (Feedback from participants)

- Recognising the importance of the decision-making process
- Lack of time to develop concrete answers - need for another conference
- Advantage of preparing personal experiences before the workshop thus leaving more time for discussion
- While these issues are not 'sexy' they are vital for the life and soul of the collective
- Importance of planning - establishing good initial structure
- New economic structures and ventures.

## QUOTABLE QUOTES

"Consensus decision-making is a thing you have to learn!"

"You should put as much into maintaining a group as in setting up!"

"Deal with conflict - no losers!!"

"Acceptable compromise - if consensus doesn't work, fall back onto legal requirements for decision-making - majority model"

"Unless actively maintaining interaction then groups or individuals drift away from each other".

## COLLABORATIVE DECISION-MAKING

### KEY POINTS

- Make sure we don't get consensus by exhaustion or politeness
- Balance between PROCESS and ACTION
- Take the emphasis off CONSENSUS: put it more onto COLLABORATION (ie. can also mean we might vote to stamp end-point). Can help IMPLEMENTATION phase.
- Is all about POWER SHARING

### PRINCIPLES

- More information, the better
- Co-operative decision (should be well clarified for the group)
  - small decisions/ small numbers
  - large decisions/large numbers
- Each needs to own part in decision-making
- Need to affirm good contributions in consensus
- Each community needs to work up a (local context) set of principles.

### PROCESSES

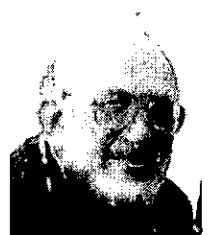
- Set up "decision-making" wedge (clear)
- Having conflict resolution process in place.

### TOOLS

- Self-awareness- power (adult, child, parent)
- Heart listening
- Assertion messages
- Taking responsibility for processes
- Facilitating skills
- What we need
  - courage - generosity - tolerance - persistence

"You should put as much into maintaining a group as in setting it up!"

"Acceptable compromise - if consensus doesn't work, fall back onto legal requirements for decision-making - majority model"





## MAKING MEETINGS MARVELLOUS

**MEETING MAP** (handout available from Commonground)

- Good to have a checklist of "good meeting" points

- Frustration can arise from:
  - poor meeting management
  - poor decision-making.

### Three components

1. Pre-meeting
2. During the meeting,
3. Post-meeting

\* Have a large clock and set it according to time allocated for each item.

## CREATIVE ECONOMICS ISSUES

- Developing existing skills by doing jobs on an established community (eg. catering)
- Use of NEIS scheme to further build business leg. A co-op cafe, calling on co-opted labour/ local resources). Use of existing local support base
- Use of "privately owned" income to generate "private" or "community" assets without "private loss" (and in fact, slight: "private gain")
- Threats are - disclosure of assets/income
  - lack of trust, - fears of having to 'come down hard'

### GETTING STARTED

- Community Land Bank.

Once first piece of land is bought, rental/lease fee would pay off next piece of land

- Initial capital could come from existing communities

- Way to spread risk could be to get "higher order" co-op to collect little amounts from a lot of communities

- Loans from ethical investment lenders

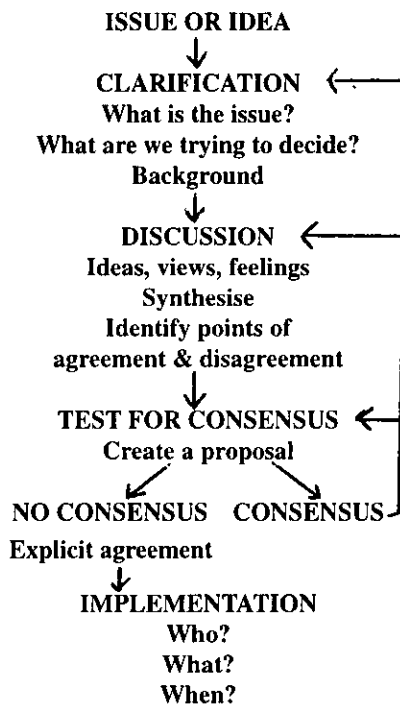
- Loans from ethical investment lenders got by big communities, who then lend to start-ups (eg. Australian Ethical Investments)

- Look at existing vacancies within current communities instead of setting up new communities

- - A newsletter which lists all communities which have shared vacant land etc, would be a tool for the above proposal

- Government funds for project for example, young people, rather than for land. Difficult, but possible (eg. community helping disabled like German community, Commonground). Have to recognise the commitments grants entail.

## PROCESS



## Dealing Creatively with Conflict

Workshop held at the Intentional Communities Gathering.

Fifteen fellow communitarians attended. Firstly, we worked on getting in touch with our feelings associated with conflict, 99.9% of which were negative - *sound familiar?*

We discussed various types of conflicts that participants had been involved in, or were currently experiencing in their communities.

We explored some useful tools to use, ranging from, 'courage to deal with conflict', 'assertiveness' and 'reflective listening'. This was followed by an opportunity to practice some of the tools in small groups.

Once you've got the tools you need a process and we explored a complete process, current jargon being, 'Best Practice', which has the most possibility of success.

Unfortunately, we only had a limited two and a half hours and there was not enough time to explore 'dealing with conflict' in a role play.

The never ending challenge of dealing creatively with conflict continues.

## Economics as if 'People Really Mattered'

The Economics forum at the Intentional Communities Festival discussed the key failures of our current economic system.

Much concern was expressed about the difficulty of funding the establishment of new communities. Alternative approaches, including seed money being provided by established communities, interpersonal lending and the roles of ethical investment organisations, were discussed.

Making Meetings Work Presented meetings map, which is basically a guide to the components of a good meeting. Some discussion and questions followed. The main focus was on facilitation skills as a paramount ingredient to clear meeting process. Some didactic input, some discussion and then role play to work through a challenging facilitation situation.

LETS was seen as an important and innovative system but its failings were acknowledged. Chief among these were members reluctant to incur LETS debt, lack of support from traders who command the potential to generate significant monetary income and the difficulties of trading items which have high material costs. The vexed question of differential rewards was also discussed.

In addition, the discussion touched briefly on the impact of legislation and regulation of the cost of key products, for example housing.

## FINANCIAL & LEGAL DISCUSSION:

### Notes from Meeting 03/01/97

As one participant observed, this topic was not sexy. However, it was a recognition that we live in the lean mean nineties that this topic was so well attended. 1970 type visionaries are fine, but they need to be complimented with the hard disciplines championed by accountants and lawyers.

This session opened up many issues people were keen to explore. We chose three - setting up communities, sustaining the entity and developing economical collaborative businesses.

Many aspects of these issues were opened up and it was clearly demonstrated that participants had their eyes wide open as to the pitfalls and possibilities of intentional community living. The Australian Communities movement has learnt a thing or two since the Aquarius festival in Nimbin in 1973. There is a strong recognition that 'just do it' is not good enough. We need to be able to meet our own individual economic security needs, sustain a dynamic community entity and be able to deal with all the legal, financial and emotional issues that are involved

To provide us all and newcomers with better support there were some good suggestions in terms of where to from here - booklet on issues to deal with before establishing a community, a lending organisation where asset rich communities can financially assist new communities, equipment pooling and developing a visitor network where people can see how existing communities have dealt with issues.

Notes were taken for those keen to survive collaboratively in the 90's!

There is material available published by Common Ground in regard to community dynamics.

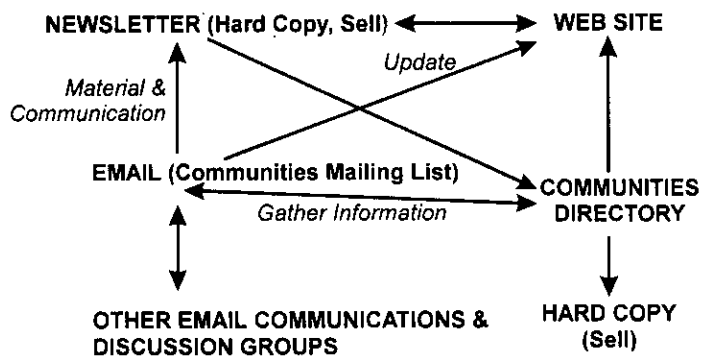
Titles: Decision Making, Ingredients for Conflict Resolution, Mediation, Personal Growth, Chairing a meeting, Consensus Process, Listening from the Heart, Assertive & Constructive Criticism, Role of a Facilitator, and "Community Glue".

If you would like to access this material please send \$3 in stamps with a large, stamped, self addressed envelope to Bridget Jordan, Dorroughby Road, Via Lismore 2480. Phone (066) 895 300. There may be a delay, so please be patient.

# Linking Communities - Proposed Communication Setup

One proposal to come from the intentional communities meeting at Seymour was for a newsletter or magazine to communicate among groups but also with the outside world - we would like to let others know what we are doing and hopefully recruit more people to the community lifestyle.

There was quite a bit of discussion about whether this should take the form of hard copy or something on the internet. Among those who favoured the internet, some wanted a Web presence while others felt that a dedicated communities Email mailing list would be preferable.



## A proposed system for communication among communities

In the best tradition of consensus we came up with something to cover all bases. This is illustrated in the accompanying diagram but for those who find it a bit cryptic...a wordy explanation:

A hardcore newsletter is to be developed. This will be suitable for sale among communities and to the outside world through whatever outlets can be arranged. A Web site newsletter will also be set up with a hypertext link to a list of intentional communities (whoever wants to be on the list). A dedicated mailing list (Email) will be used for casual chat among communities but also as a source of information for the newsletter, the Web site and the communities directory. The directory will also be available in hard copy for sale.

The following work roles were identified:

- **Co-ordinator** - to organise layout and design, organise guest editors, choose a theme for each issue, communicate with the person administering the Web site and organise a box for "snail mail" contributions as well as an Email address. (*Gloria Constine and Jan Tilden put their hands up for this job*),
- **Guest editor/s** from different communities to gather material, assist with theme/s type on disk and Email to co-ordinators,
- **Contact person** in each community to distribute content and organise sponsorship,
- **Computer recycling collective** which could suggest or provide at a fee appropriate computers and programs so communities could access the internet (*Greg Hall of Elands is the contact person for this aspect of the system*),
- **Email co-ordinator** - *Robert Tap, Crystal Waters*,
- **Computer skills people** to contact communities to the internet (*Rob Tap offered to co-ordinate this*),
- **Web design and administration person** to communicate with newsletter co-ordinators (**Rob Tap**),
- **Community directory project co-ordinator** (*Simon Clough, Dharmananda*).

The positions of newsletter co-ordinator and guest editing were identified as ones which could be paid at this stage. Possible funding sources to accommodate this payment and general costs were

advertising, levies on communities and returns from sales through general distribution.

### ACTION:

- This is the first issue of the hard copy newsletter, being made in the office of *Nimbin News* by Gloria and Jan. We've decided to call it **Community Interlink** (What do you think? As of December '96 this name had not been registered by anyone else.) We would like the following from each community :

1. How many copies of **Community Interlink** would be required, not only for your community but extras that you might want to sell?
2. We would like a one off contribution from each participating community of between \$20 - \$50 to cover start-up costs. Sources of funding will be reviewed as soon as the first issue has been distributed. Make cheques payable to **Community Interlink**.
3. Nominate someone from your community to be the contact person for **Community Interlink** and let us know who it is (address below).
4. Editorial contributions for future issues can be sent to Gloria by "snail mail". We don't have Email organised yet. Suitable formats for contributions are Microsoft Word, Pagemaker 5, ASCII (on IBM disk). Always include typed, hard copy or typed copy alone. The address is Nimbin News, PO Box 209, Nimbin 2480.

Rob Tap has made some enquiries about cheap, *Internet* ready computers and also possible ways of getting a free *Web* site but before going any further, he needs to get an idea of how many communities are interested in connecting via the *Internet*, so...

5. Please write to Rob at Crystal Waters Permaculture Village, Conondale, Q 4552 if you are interested in getting connected. ☺

## DIRECTORY DEVELOPMENTS

**THE PREVIOUS** item is basically a report of one working party set up at the Seymour conference to develop means of communicating among intentional communities in Australia. Since it was written there have been some developments on the "Communities Directory" front.

Many readers will have received a letter from Lionel Pollard who is currently updating his intentional communities lists to produce an "Australian Alternative Communities Handbook". His letter is reproduced below. There may be no reason for us to duplicate this effort to produce yet another directory.

When Lionel's list is complete - he is aiming for July at this stage - it will be available for a small price in booklet form.

As can be seen from the diagram of communications arrangements proposed at the conference, we hoped to have the communities directory available from our web site. Instead, perhaps we could have a link from the communities web site to Lionel Pollard's site, helping our site browsers access his list.

Also of interest in the "Community Directory" context is a database which Global Ecovillage Network Oceania (GEN Oceania) is planning to prepare. GEN is aware that some (perhaps many) intentional communities do not want their particulars on lists in general circulation, although they would be happy to be part of a network whose participants benefit from sharing information among themselves. GEN has discussed the importance of developing a system which ensures confidentiality when it is requested.

Rob Tap, who is a member of the communications working party from the conference as well as being involved with GEN Oceania will keep us up to date with developments on this front.

The three parties currently interested in developing a directory/database of intentional communities - Lionel Pollard, GEN and the communications working party from the Seymour conference will need to co-operate closely to minimise duplication of effort and make sure everyone gets more or less what they want.

Jan

*(Background to this: I read a study in "New Scientist" that said most people in the U.S.A. could identify 1,000 brands, but less than five common plants.)*

# ONE THOUSAND BRANDNAMES.

One thousand brandnames and less than five plants Do you laugh or do you cry?

One thousand brandnames and less than five plants Is what we can identify

Next time someone tells you that humanity's rise

Is due to the consumer forces of free enterprise,

Ask them how they expect we can survive

When the score's brandnames 1,000, plants 5.

One thousand dead things that you have to buy

One thousand names upon which you rely

They bloom and they blossom, but they're dead, just the same

While the things that are alive, you can't quite give a name

And why bother, when all that you seek

Is on special in aisle five all this week.

Capitalism: 1,000; botany: five -

if you eat a brandname, could it keep you alive?

What a comfort it will be when you're hungry and cold  
to know the names of the things that you used to get sold -

what a comfort it will be to say:

"Lower prices were once here to stay".

One thousand brandnames and less than five plants

We sure have equipped ourselves well

For that incomprehensible future,

Where there's nothing to buy and there's nothing to sell

We'll know all the jingles, but we'll starve just the same,

Surrounded by food we're unable to name -

Equip yourselves now with a chance -

learn the names of all edible plants.

C. Kennedy.



## Introduction:

Some old timers confirmed that this was the first national gathering of intentional communities in Australia. The event was more successful than we, the Fruitsalad Communities Network as hosts, imagined. It inspired and gave much joy and stimulus to participants and lay a solid foundation for the development of a national ..... something!

The gathering was informally dubbed the "Communities coming out" show and much energy was mustered to celebrate and promote intentional community within Australia. This is exactly what we Fruitsalad mob had hoped for. As the gathering demonstrated, it has been the dream of others too.

## Where the idea came from

A group of Victorian communities have been meeting regularly since 1992. Initially we came together to promote intentional community at the 1993 Moora Moora festival. Since then, we have held weekend gatherings where we catch up with each other, share our experiences of community, learn from each other and have fun together. Somewhat light heartedly along the way we called ourselves the Fruitsalad Communities Network.

We get a lot out of these gatherings and wanted a chance to get together with a wider range of kindred spirits. There were people and communities we knew of but never had the opportunity to get to know them. Additionally, the Utopian Dreaming book edited by Bill Metcalfe and published in 1996 provided an extra impetus for a gathering of Australian communities. Seven of the eleven contributors to the book attended.

We also reckoned it was time that the Australian Communities movement became more active in promoting it's many selves as serious lifestyle options. We know it is a great way to live and work,

but our society at large is not well aware of the richness of communal life.

There is an ever growing need for our society to pursue sustainable paths, but living communally is still seen as a marginal option. We need to take ourselves more seriously, act with confidence and promote intentional community as an integral part of a sustainable future. This gathering was a timely opportunity to gather our strengths!

## What happened

The event was held over four days at the start of January. It was attended by 64

adults and 21 children. There were 28 Australian communities from Queensland, WA, SA, NSW and Victoria. This was complimented by representatives from 3 overseas communities - Germany, Scotland and Spain.

It was held at Commonground, which is both an intentional community and social change organisation. It is located on 95 acres of lovely bush land, 95 kms north of Melbourne. Because Commonground operates a small training and conference centre, most people were able to be accommodated indoors. But as we had exceptionally delightful weather, those camping did not feel like the poor relation. And because of this weather the dam was ever popular.

The gathering was for egalitarian communities - those that are not hierarchically based or with a guru/leader. The gathering was catered for which people enjoyed immensely, yet we retained rosters for dishes and cleanup - always a good opportunity for people to get to know each other or pursue that unfinished conversation. Paid

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childcare was provided at strategic times for the parents of young 'uns. Cost of childcare was built into the general cost as we wanted this to be a child friendly event where the cost of childcare was shared by all.

People thought that the cost was manageable, indeed lower than what people generally pay for this level of facility. We made a small surplus - \$400 - which we hope can go towards the cost of organising the next shindig.

When planning for the show, two concerns were made clearly to us - how will we fill a four day event and make sure we leave plenty of free time. As hindsight so well informs us, there was much agreement that the event should have gone for five days. Much of the free time was swallowed up by participants desire to do more workshops or hold more discussions on all sorts of things. People were keen to learn. As one weary bod said 'I can go home and collapse and do nothing, there's too much good stuff happening here to miss, now I am here'.

As the above sentiments indicate, the workshops and facilitated discussions were very popular. To this, our opening, morning, pre-dinner and ending rituals complimented our sense of being 'in it together'. These rituals focussed on our connection with each other and the earth we share. And to this again we added our celebrations, especially on our last night, where the talent of our home grown entertainers was simply stunning - especially Tripod!

## Postscript

In early February this year, we Fruitsaladers came back to Commonground and reflected on the success of the gathering. Given that we first got together five years ago, the Celebrating Intentional Community show has been a long time coming. But we have started from scratch and thoroughly enjoyed the journey to the point where we have hosted this gathering. We enjoy what we have together here in Victoria. We look forward to making a contribution to an Australia-wide communities movement with all the rich rewards of new friendships with kindred spirits and a sense of solidarity that we are making a vital contribution to a sustainable planet.

## Message from the publisher:

At present there is not enough in the bank to pay for the publishing of this, very important, magazine. We have sent it out to as many communities as we have addresses for, and hope that most of you will subscribe, post haste, so we can pay for the printing and mailout A.S.A.P.

Members of communities are invited to submit relevant articles, creative descriptions of themselves (getting to know each other type stuff), practical information, discussion of issues etc; and we'll try to fit it all in. This is your mag ... of, for and by people who live a community life.

Show Community Interlink to those communities who may not know of it, and secretaries, **please put it on your noticeboards so all residents can read it.**

It is also a good vehicle for those seeking THE community for themselves, or for many other reasons. So, there is a classified charge of 40c per word, cash up front, for classifieds to go in the next magazine, which may be in two, three or six months, whenever it seems appropriate, and depending on the response from communities.

Subscriptions are \$10 for multiples of five x number of editions. (3 editions = \$30). Or for individuals, \$2 x number of editions.

Sponsorship can be obtained at \$30 for a 6cm x 6cm space, or space equivalent.

All articles, subscriptions, ads and classifieds to: **Community Interlink, P.O. Box 209, Nimbin 2480.**

Gloria xx

Community Interlink

# UP-DATE ON MULTIPLE OCCUPANCY LEGISLATION IN NSW

## THE STORY SO FAR

In late 1994 the former National Party Minister for Planning, Robert Webster withdrew State Environmental Planning Policy 15 (Multiple Occupancy of Rural Lands). SEPP 15 had been a state wide policy permitting land sharing communities to be established. It was introduced after protracted struggles with local government by the then Minister for Planning Bob Carr.

The removal of SEPP15 meant that there could be no new Multiple Occupancies and that there was a question mark over the expansion of existing communities. Existing communities became labelled as "non conforming uses"!

Fortunately during the election campaign which saw the Labor Party returned to power Pan Community Council, (a MO lobby group) was able to extract a promise from the party that it would reinstate SEPP15. Two years of lobbying later, thanks to some great support from Ian Cohen and Janelle Saffin members of the Upper House, Craig Knowles the Minister responsible has put SEPP15 on exhibition for comment and possible reinstatement.

### LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Pan Com has organised a number of meetings and sent out newsletters urging communities to send submissions and letters of support for the reinstatement of the policy. Thanks to the astuteness and lobbying skills of Peter Hamilton. Pan Com was able to change an afternoon trip to Bellingen by senior planning bureaucrats into a 2 day tour including meetings with MO lobby groups and inspections of communities.

Pan Com meet with senior representatives of the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning at Mullumbimby. Pan Com made a number of proposed amendments regarding the policy. They were in brief:

1. A change of name of the policy from Multiple Occupancy of Rural Land to Rural Landsharing Communities.

2. Changes that reinforce the intentionality aspect of communities to limit opportunities for speculative development.

3. Additions that give shareholders in communities greater occupancy rights over their dwellings. This should facilitate members being able to raise personal loans.

You can get a copy of the Pan Com proposals from Peter Hamilton, 1/50 Paterson Street Byron Bay 2481.

The Department produced a draft copy of guidelines for Multiple Occupancy. This has the potential to be an extremely useful document for people wanting to establish a community. It would complement a manual on community that is already in draft form. The manual deals with more of the nuts and bolts social issues of community.

The Pan Com representatives felt that they got a very good hearing from the Departmental representatives and that our suggested changes would receive close consideration. We also were given an undertaking from the Manager, Planning and Design Branch that we would be consulted prior to the policy being finalised.☺

Simon Clough for Pan Com

**Stop Press:** Submissions are now closed. Dept of Urban Affairs and Planning advise they expect to make a report to the minister in 8-12 weeks time.

## Workshop - Issues of Succession

It is recognised that the average age of people in intentional communities is increasing. We have an issue with succession. Who is going to carry the dream and all the projects done in its name when the founding generation is gone? Many of us thought we were developing a new way of life - a model of planet friendly, future friendly human existence. If we are not to be remembered as a mere demographic glitch (assuming our species does not go extinct in the near future leaving no-one to remember anything) we are going to have to pass the dream on to a new generation.

"Issues of Succession" was the topic of one workshop at the intentional communities gathering at Commonground. Not surprisingly, the participants discovered that common circumstances produce common experience - issues raised were shared by many of the communities present. Here are some of the points raised in this workshop:

- it is important to take an intergenerational view of land management,
- planning for succession includes appropriate design in the early stages to allow for future expansion,
- if communities have been through a long or difficult process getting to the point where everyone feels comfortable with each other, it can be hard to take the risk of admitting new members,
- the former is more of a problem for small closeknit communities than for larger ones,
- most communities don't expect the children of their members to make up the next generation but rather new younger people who are attracted to the community,

- ideally we should provide the next generation with similar opportunities as those which attracted and enabled us to set up/join communities. For example, we had very little money yet we were able to get land. How can we recruit new people without requiring a big outlay up front?

- we must be explicit with people about what they are joining. It is important to avoid an unconscious culture where there are unwritten rules people can transgress without even knowing they exist,

- there is now a new generation of young people interested in joining/setting up communities. What is our attractiveness to these people and how do we "road-test" this?

- in seeking to attract younger people to our communities, we must avoid the "social work" model ie. assuming we know what is good for them and trying to do it for them,

- one way to attract younger people might be to offer them a stable economic base. Joining communities can limit people's opportunities to make money. Something must compensate for this (as it obviously did for the founding generation).

The workshop raised many issues which were discussed further during the butcher's paper session on the last day. A short report in the minutes (pp. ) summarises the outcome of this discussion.

If succession is an issue in your community, watch further editions of *Community Interlink* for more discussion and suggestions (or contribute your own comments on the topic).

Jan Tilden

