

This booklet outlines in cartoon form perhaps one of the most significant developments in contemporary politics — the blending of the traditional concerns of the Labour Movement with those of the fast-growing ecological lobby into a new concept, *Eco-Socialism*.

It has been compiled from the relevant parts of *Nuclear Power for Beginners* since this was considered to be the best material available for publicizing the new ideas in the most concise and effective manner.

Not only does the booklet trace the coming together of the Greens and the Reds, but it shows how you can help turn their vision into our reality.

ECO~SOCIALISM IN A NUTSHELL



SERA

Writers and Readers 

2013 Introduction

Climate & Capitalism is pleased and proud to re-publish this historic and long-unavailable document of the ecosocialist movement. It was, I believe, the first time that the word “eco-socialism” appeared in the title of any publication, and one of the first times that it appeared in print at all.

Eco-Socialism in a Nutshell was originally published in 1980, by Writers and Reader Cooperative in London, UK. Publication was arranged by Stan Rosenthal, a founding member of the Socialist Environment and Resources Association.

On the origin of the pamphlet, Stan writes:

“Having read *Nuclear Power for Beginners* [published by Writers and Readers in 1978] I was struck by how brilliantly certain parts of it encapsulated the broader message that we in SERA (the Socialist Environment & Resources Association, founded in 1973) were trying to get over to the Labour movement here.

“I therefore approached Writers & Readers (Lisa Appignanesi) to see whether they would agree to me making them up as a SERA pamphlet with an introduction by myself, which they obviously did.

“Stephen Croall, the author of *Nuclear Power for Beginners*, agreed to his work being used in the pamphlet and acknowledged his debt to SERA material for some of the ideas.

“The pamphlet was then reviewed by various newspapers, distributed to left bookshops and generally touted around at SERA events. I also sent copies to leading members of the Labour Party.”

In some ways, *Eco-Socialism in a Nutshell* shows how new and under-developed the concept of eco-socialism was in 1980. But there is much in it that today’s movement can learn from, especially its insistence on a class approach to the environmental crisis.

Many thanks to Stan for sending *Climate & Capitalism* a mint-condition copy of the pamphlet for scanning, and to the current copyright owner, For Beginners LLC (<http://www.forbeginnersbooks.com>) for granting permission to make it available to a new generation of reds and greens

Ian Angus
Editor, *Climate & Capitalism*
<http://climateandcapitalism.com>

Introduction copyright 2013, *Climate & Capitalism*
Content copyright 1980, Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative
(For Beginners LLC).
All rights reserved.

Some press comments on the 1980 edition ...

“It is quick and easy to read, and is a fine introduction to the subject.” (*Leeds Other Paper*)

“For those lefties who find the Ecology Party not red enough, nor the Labour Party green enough, there is eco-socialism. Perkily publicized in a new words and cartoons booklet ... this -ism plots the pedal-driven road to revolution.” (*The Observer*)

“No doubt its title will convince the mainline Labour trads that SERA is just freaky and fringe. And as it takes the form of a strip cartoon, you can’t take it seriously, can you? Oh yes you can, for this is a serious attempt to popularize ideas which ought to be in the mainstream of political debate. Author and artist Stephen Croall and Kaianders Sempler have packed in with great visual punch most of the key points which we have come to sum up as the ecological perspective. Obligatory reading for the NEC.” (*The Guardian*)

“This booklet cleverly outlines in cartoon form the blending of the Labour movement with those of the growing ecological lobby – the coming together of the Greens and the Reds – and shows how you can help turn their vision into reality. There are many questions to be answered and this booklet manages to provide in an easily-digested form, the answers to most of the questions and doubts of interested people both inside and outside the ecology movement. It is well worth getting hold of a copy.” (*Good Earth*)

“*Eco-Socialism in a Nutshell* is a positive, cheerful and optimistic alternative to the ‘doomster’ image commonly associated with the environmental movement.” (*Brighton Voice*)

“Eco-Socialism is the fusion of ecology and socialism, seen by many people as the only hope for saving the world. The Socialist Environment and Resources Association have attempted to show in this cartoon pamphlet ... how this concept has been formed by a blending of the ideas of the labour movement and the ecological lobby. Unfortunately this tantalizingly brief summary reflects just how under-developed eco-socialist ideas are, stopping with ‘All we have to do is get there ...’ Exactly, but how? SERA uses the cartoon format because ‘too many important messages are sunk without trace under the weight of the words in which they appear.’ But this is not the case with the under-nourished infant called eco-socialism. If it is to survive in these violent times, it actually needs – right now – more of these words to build itself the theoretical backbone it currently lacks.” (*Time Out*)

ECO-SOCIALISM in a Nutshell

RECYCLED FROM 'NUCLEAR POWER FOR BEGINNERS'
Copyright 1980 Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative

INTRODUCTION



For some time now respected academics have been alerting us to the dangers of diminishing natural resources, mounting environmental pollution and uncontrolled technology. Until recently the Labour movement in this country has tended to regard these warnings as being at best irrelevant or at worst hostile to working class interests.

However, the post 1973 energy crisis has brought home to even the most die hard growth-at-all costs fanatic, the finite nature of one vital resource and there is a growing realisation that other raw materials are in short supply in relation to the needs of a world population expected to increase from 4000 million to 6000 million by the 21st century. Moreover, the link between our industrial way of life and many illnesses is daily becoming more evident; whilst Flixborough, Seveso, Harrisburg, supertanker accidents and oil rig disasters have shattered the myth of the fail-safe technology.

All these events have underlined the relevance of the issues raised by the ecological movement to the socialist concern for a better life for all (including future generations!). At the same time more and more ecologists are beginning to appreciate that the changes they desire can only be achieved in a socialist society which puts community need before private profit and requires all enterprises to shoulder their social responsibilities.

This fusion of ecological and socialist considerations can be termed ECO-SOCIALISM. The following pages trace in comic-strip form how it happened and how it can be developed.

The choice of the comic-strip form to present this new concept is deliberate. The comic-strip simplifies and makes the communication of ideas fun, which is how it should be. Too many important messages are sunk without trace under the weight of the words in which they appear. It also accords with the positive, cheerful, optimistic, alternative that ECO-SOCIALISM represents — in contrast to the doomster image commonly associated with the environmental movement.

Finally it will be noted that material for this booklet has been drawn from *Nuclear Power for Beginners* (with the kind permission of the authors Stephen Croall and Kaianders Sempler). We hope that these extracts will not only focus your attention on ECO-SOCIALISM but will also whet your appetite for *Nuclear Power for Beginners* (available from all good bookshops £1.95) and for Stephen Croall's next book *Ecology for Beginners* due to be published in 1981.

Stan Rosenthal
Socialist Environment
and Resources Association

THE ECOLOGISTS POINTED THE WAY...

Environment groups launched the anti-nuke movement and have long been its vanguard...they were the first to spell out the dangers of a hard energy future...to organise resistance...and to formulate alternatives...

Adding an ecological dimension to the class struggle, radical environmentalists offered a fresh solution to the ravages of capitalism...but they also annoyed many dogged Marxists who kept insisting that technology was neutral...



BUT SOME ECOLOGISTS LOST THEIR WAY...



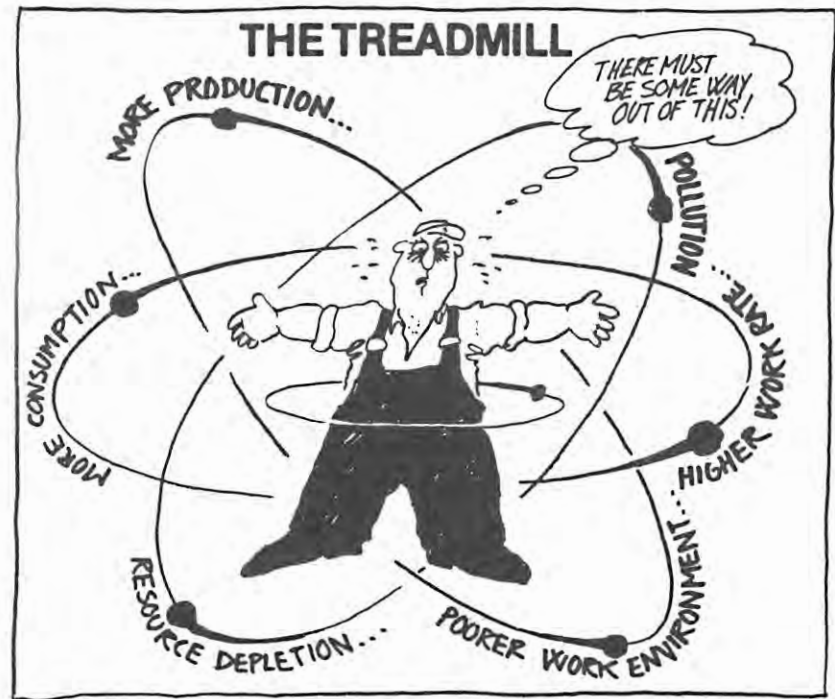
OTHERS GOT CARRIED AWAY...



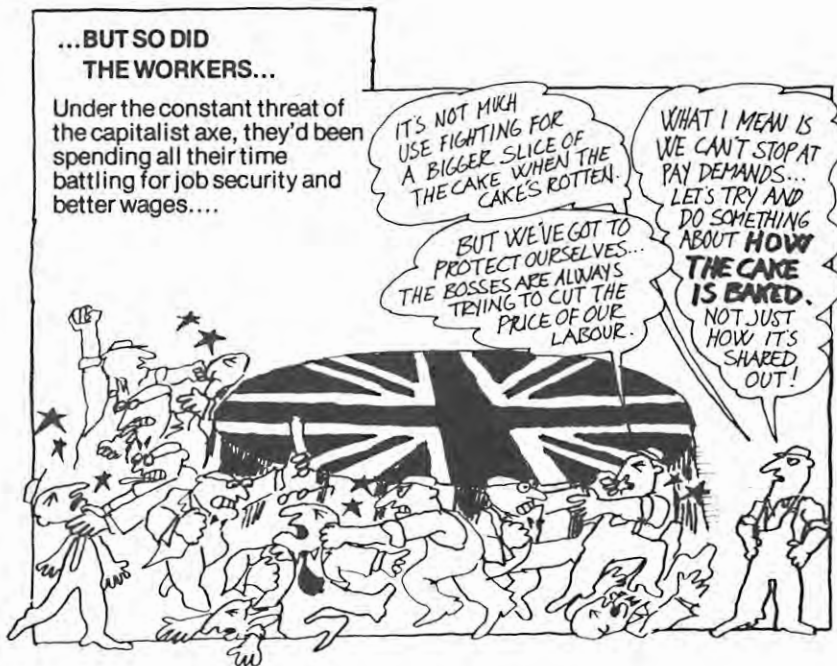
...AND MANY MISSED THE POINT...



SO IT WASN'T STRANGE THAT MUCH OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT DISMISSED THE ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT AS AN ASSEMBLY OF MIDDLE-CLASS CRAZIES OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE FACTS OF WORKING LIFE...



THE WORKERS STARTED LISTENING WHEN THE ENVIRONMENTALISTS STARTED TALKING THEIR LANGUAGE...





The workers and technicians at the British concern *Lucas Aerospace* campaigned for ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTION when threatened with closures and mass redundancies. The staff at the various Lucas plants formed a Combine Committee and drew up a full-scale Corporate Plan...proposing a move away from arms production to things like solar heating systems and wind generators, rubber-wheeled trains and insulation made from waste paper...



And the management's response?

The bosses refused to listen... which proved to everyone that reasoned argument makes no impression on vested interests... but news of Lucas workers' approach to the class struggle spread internationally...



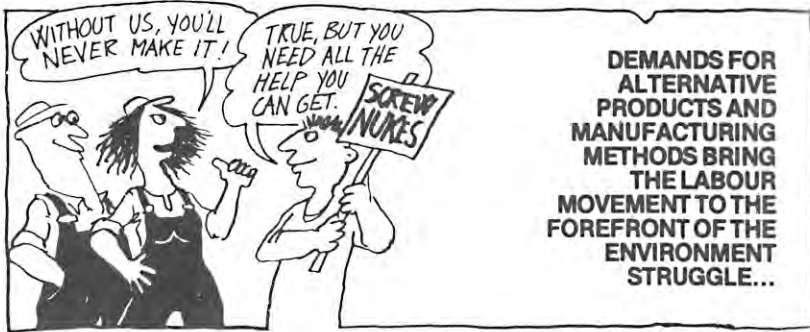
ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTION

took root as an idea...it was:

- * discussed at workplaces from Lapland to Australia
- * proposed for other industries like steel, pulp, packaging, car-making and shipbuilding
- * raised in the British Parliament and the US Congress
- * closely examined by trade journals and some of the mass media

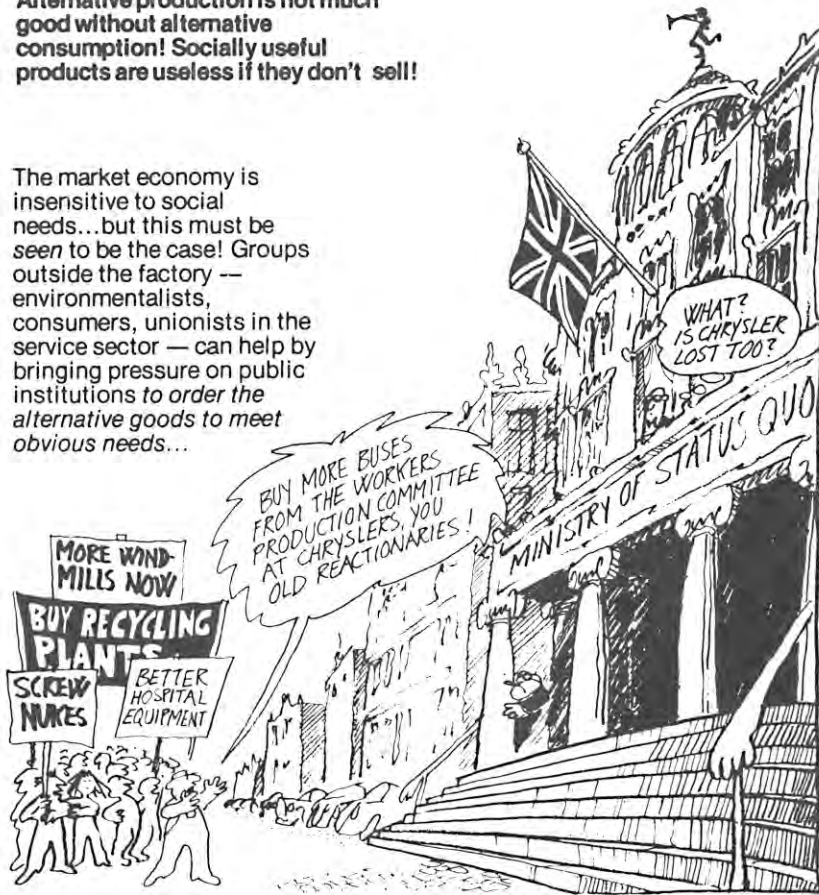
A centre for the development of socially useful products in industry was set up in London in 1978. And Lucas Combine Committee speakers travelled into Europe at the invitation of unions there...





Alternative production is not much good without alternative consumption! Socially useful products are useless if they don't sell!

The market economy is insensitive to social needs...but this must be seen to be the case! Groups outside the factory — environmentalists, consumers, unionists in the service sector — can help by bringing pressure on public institutions to order the alternative goods to meet obvious needs...



TOWARDS A TOTAL PERSPECTIVE...

In the Public Services...



In housing areas...



At the shops...



In public transport...

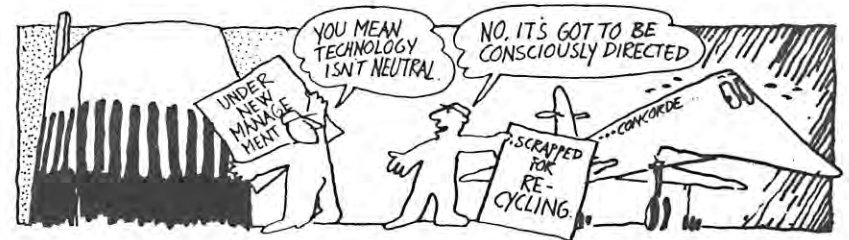


...AND A CO-ORDINATED DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT!

In planning...

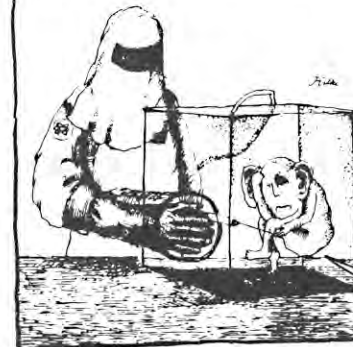
A lasting solution of the resources problem requires careful planning of energy use, work patterns and products...social equality requires humanised production under workers' and consumers' control...a system attuned to people's real needs...not shaped by the manipulated 'demands' of passive consumers...

BUT SUBSTITUTING A PLANNED ECONOMY FOR A MARKET ECONOMY IS NOT THE ULTIMATE GOAL...ONLY A PRECONDITION FOR REAL CHANGE...



In today's market economies science and technology is largely owned and controlled by the capitalist multinationals and serves their social, political and economic goals...

In tomorrow's planned economies research and development must be strongly focused on things like public transport, socially-useful products, soft energy techniques, recycling and safe workplaces...



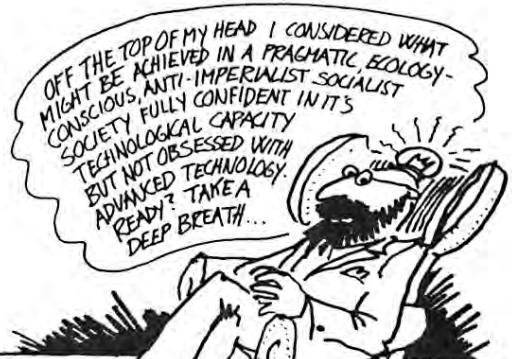
WALKING ON TWO LEGS....



We can bury nukes, sophisticated weapons, supertankers, supersonic airliners, chemical sprays and electric banana peelers along with capitalism... while happily inheriting useful things like computers, steam engines, cameras, telephones, tape recorders, typewriters, printing presses, bicycles, zeppelins, etc etc...

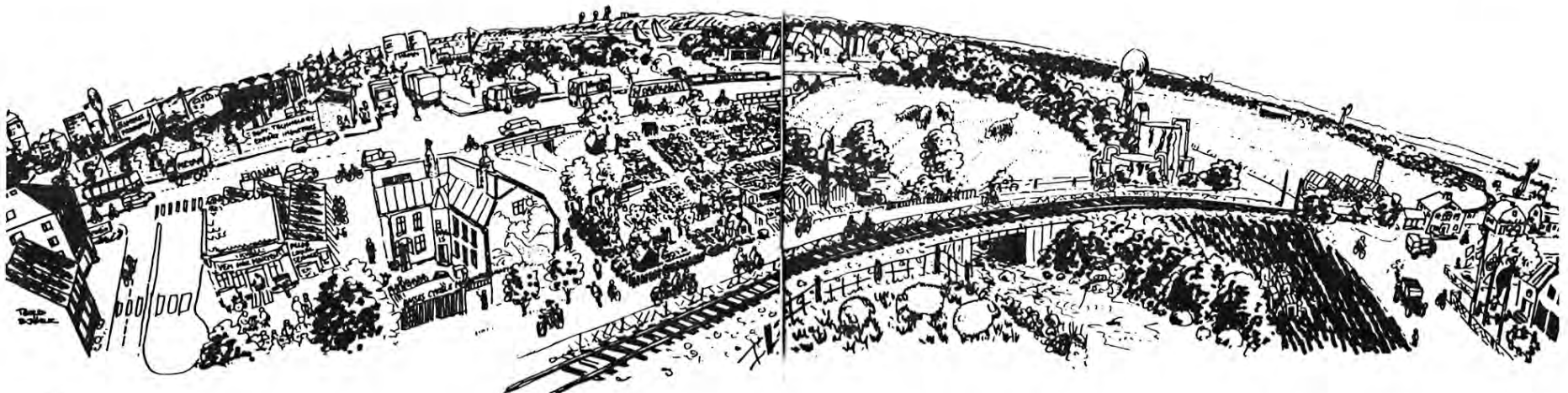
COMPLETE THE LIST YOURSELF

The practical circumstances are hard to foresee... But someone had a crack the other day in a British radical science journal, Undercurrents...



Large and small-scale sun, wind, water, geothermal etc energy usage. Collective digestion of all organic wastes for methane. Total energy systems and district heating. Heat pumps, hydrogen and methanol as basic fuels. Central electricity generation from many different sources with local grids. Fuel cells. Controlled exploitation of abundant resources. Advanced, autonomous houses outside the cities, mostly of large size. All the main industrial materials, although not in overwhelming abundance. Wide range of special steels and plastics. Semi-conductors and electronic bric-brac. Some computers, radio, telly etc. Much automation in tedious production jobs. Litho-presses. Proper R & D. Knowledge firmly based on the traditional sciences. Tractors. Combines etc. Machines for

More even... Many more in... Health food at... Trains. Public transport. Dirigibles. Few planes. Some long-distance travel but less commuting. Strong controls on environmentally harmful substances. Very strict emission standards. Less mining, with improved work conditions. Controlled distribution of raw materials. Careful conservation programme. Equipment designed for reliability, ease of repair, long life and recycling of components. Smaller range of consumer goods. Wider range of living patterns and possibility for greater variety within a person's life. Life-long education-and-work. Regional emphasis within a national and international economy. ETC...





A CASE IN POINT

Motor-cars are just about the worst energy-wasters around... One remedy is to improve engines so that they use fuel more efficiently. Another is to make cars last 30, 40 or 50 years so you don't need to keep making new ones...

THESE ARE FILTHY COMMIE IDEAS... BUILT-IN OBSOLESCENCE KEEPS THE WHEELS TURNING!



BEST OF ALL: DECENTRALISE SOCIETY SO THAT PEOPLE LIVE WITHIN EASY DISTANCE OF THEIR FRIENDS AND WORKPLACES!

Even better, do both and shift the emphasis from private motoring to public transport... less vehicles, less fuel, less raw materials, less energy... and less pollution!

THAT'S A LONG-TERM GOAL... AND LIKE THE SWITCH TO COLLECTIVE TRANSPORT IT CAN SCARCELY BE ACHIEVED IN A MARKET ECONOMY...

UNPLANNABLE ECONOMIES AND UNECONOMIC PLANNING...

Calls for some form of planning are now being heard from economic experts in such capitalist strongholds as Britain and the United States... without much success...



AND THAT GREY OLD KREMLIN CROWD ISN'T MUCH OF AN INSPIRATION!

The Soviet experiment went off the rails long ago... today it's more or less a parody of socialism... a centralised, authoritarian, bureaucratic and energy-hungry society riddled with nukes...



In democracy...

EVERYONE RULES OK?

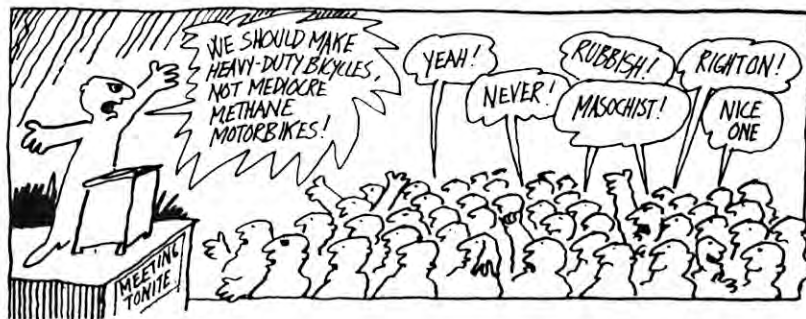


DRAFT PROPOSAL

1. Creation of committees or *councils* at local factories, housing estates and other places where people gather...
2. Council members directly elected and subject to immediate recall if they abuse responsibilities...
3. Local councils elect councils for larger units and regions...
4. Overall co-ordination...mmm...difficult...what about a directly-elected national planning body aided by council working groups with specialised fields?



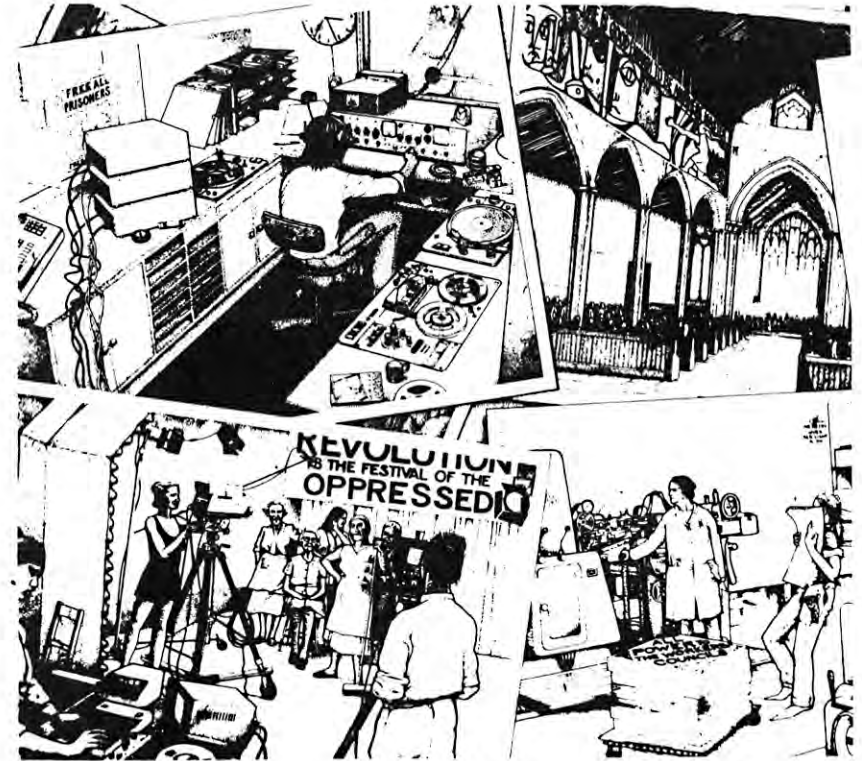
5. Factory councils decide the conditions of work — job safety, division of labour, rotation of work...
6. They cooperate with other council groups in determining the future course of production...



In living areas, neighbourhood councils could be responsible for housing management, local trading, day nurseries and recreation facilities... they could sound out local opinion on what consumer goods should be produced and distribute these in the district...



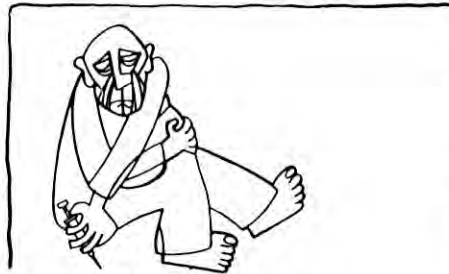
Civil rights are underpinned by widespread public involvement in mass communication, for example at community media centres...



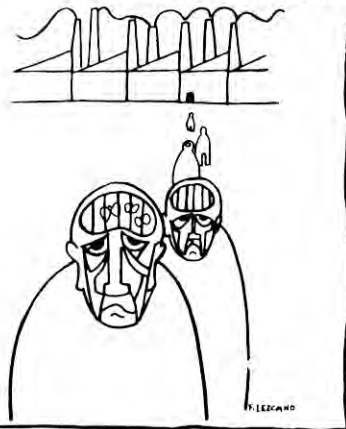
COMMUNITY MEDIA CENTRE

CHOOSING THE ECO-SOCIALIST PATH AND RECOGNISING THE PHYSICAL AND BIOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS ON HUMAN ACTIVITY DOESN'T MEAN FREEZING IN THE DARK...

It means choosing a *reasonable* material standard and a *reasonable* level of energy use instead of growing inequality and alienation...it means placing greater value on things that *count* instead of things that are merely *countable*...



We're all basically creative... It's only when we're not given responsibility or the tools to control our own lives that we become passive, violent, neurotic...



Active people who like to experiment and solve problems are not easy to oppress... they develop the self-confidence that is the lifeblood of real democracy...they don't need to be mobilised, led, ruled or watched over...quite literally, they're capable of taking matters into their own hands...



A Message From SERA

There are a number of groups trying to build bridges to the new Society.

SERA (Socialist Environment and Resources Association) is one of them. We were formed in 1973 to bring these ideas to the attention of the Labour movement. Our belief in *selective growth* related to genuine human needs in a more decentralised and democratic society accords very closely with the vision behind Croall's and Sempler's brilliant cartoon presentation.

However we do not regard the society described as just a utopian pipe-dream. It can and must be made to happen. Making it happen means raising these issues on the shop floor, in the office, at meetings and conferences. It means hard grafting in working groups refining the ideas into practical policies and publishing the results. It means forging close links with other Labour movement activists and organisations and learning from their experience at the point of production.

SERA exists to bring together those who have these objectives and want to do something about realising them. Our growing membership from all wings of the Labour movement includes affiliations from national trade unions and many Constituency Labour Parties. We have already helped to influence Labour policy on the environment, industry and energy.

But more support is needed if these ideas are to be brought into the mainstream of British politics.

You can help by

- joining as an individual member (£3.00)
- securing the affiliation of your organisation (£5.00)
- securing a donation (which is matched pound for pound by a well-known charity trust if it comes from a Labour organisation)
- buying our leaflets and pamphlets.