# THE FUTURE IS NOW

# PATHWAY TO A STEADY STATE SOCIETY

A DISCUSSION PAPER

BY

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# THE FUTURE IS NOW

*The future is now. What we do now or fail to do now is making the future or wrecking it*

(Sir Keith Hancock (1972), *Discovering Monaro, CUP, Sydney*)

## INTRODUCTION

How we live today is very different from how people once lived but just as the present was forged in the past the future is now in our hands. What we do over the next few decades will determine the lives of our descendants.

We have a choice. We can continue with our unsustainable and unfulfilling way of life, or we can set a course for a very different future. IT IS UP TO US.

The 'Future is Now', or FIN, Project is about that choice. It charts a new course for your consideration. Bear in mind that all major changes have had small beginnings. There are only two necessary preconditions: a willingness to consider change and a faith in our ability to help bring it about.

The project has three parts concerning: where we are NOW; HOW we can change; and the goal of a STEADY STATE SOCIETY.

To plot a successful course to a steady state society we need to understand where we are now. This will affect the route we take during the journey from an unsustainable to a sustainable way of life. But, of course, where we stand now must not constrain that route. If it did the prospects for a sustainable way of life would be poor indeed. To get from now to then requires a mixture of practicality and vision and above all a willingness to consider new ways and outlooks.

One thing is clear - that if we delay fundamental reform the problem of achieving it will become very much bigger. We can either start out now or run the risk of never being able to get there.

Living on the world's natural capital has deluded many into believing that there is no need for change, while others are determined to take advantage of the situation for their personal benefit at the expense of others. At the present time it is still possible to make an orderly change; that is if we move with a sense of urgency. The alternative is having to tackle a very much bigger problem in a situation of widespread environmental collapse. Another thing is certain, half measures will not suffice.

If we care to notice, the beginning of this collapse is already in evidence. Perhaps we could best sum it up as a 'quiet crisis' because many people are not aware of how far things have deteriorated. Still more are in denial out of self interest and a further aware group feels powerless to do anything about it.

Any movement for change has to start somewhere and it is the last

group which needs to spearhead the move by overcoming its feeling of helplessness and refinding its voice. Prominent amongst this group are conservationists whose chosen role in life is to be concerned about the needs of the future. We can make it our job to not just make people aware of the drastic situation but to show them an alternative and the pathway from one to the other. The task is the hardest one that conservationists will ever tackle, partly because of the great inertia in any society but also because of the fierce oppostion that can be expected from those who see their interests challenged.

In setting out to initiate the move in the belief that we can act as a catalyst for fundamental social change there are two main benefits we can espouse. The first is the need to change to avoid disaster. The second is that a steady state society would provide for more fulfilling ways of living anyway.

With regard to the first argument we need to include in our pleas information on what is likely to happen if we do not make fundamental changes. We need to paint an accurate picture of a world approaching a state of collapse in which the richest nations raid the earth for its last valuable resources and we no longer have the means to embark on a new course and begin the long task of rehabilitation. We can best do this by pointing to the cracks which are already evident in the global environment. We need to illustrate how in this 'everyman for himself' situation of an overpopulated and overdeveloped world the powerful will impose an authoritarian rule like nothing ever seen before.

With regard to the alternative of a steady state society we need to stress the likely benefits in terms of what it would offer for healthier, more creative living and compare the impact on every human being of the two options - living in a state of global collapse versus living in a steady state society.

## ORGANISATION OF THE FIN PAPER

The material in the paper has three main parts: A. The Present (NOW) (the way things are); B. The road to a steady state (HOW); and, C. Outline of a steady state society. In each of these parts the text is divided into sections dealing with: values, institutions, and consequences (energy, physical environment and social environment).

With regard to the way things work in real life these divisions are to a certain extent artificial, the most obvious example being the division between values and institutions. Whereas the institutions are meant to be the means to the ends of our value systems we all know that the institutions such as those concerned with the free market and the military have the tendency to not only reinforce the prevailing values but become something like ends in themselves; deeply entrenched and capable of being major obstacles to change. Similarly, the institutions are rarely independant. Who would go so far as to argue that business interests have no undue influence on government and that conservation groups are given equal access?

## A. THE PRESENT - THE WAY THINGS ARE

### A1 OUR VALUES, BELIEFS AND GOALS

Our values are affected by our place in society and to talk of 'our way of life' disguises the fact that there is a great deal of difference in the way people live around the globe. However, the world is dominated by powerful western nations and their value systems prevail. Therefore, the following will be easily recognised as constituting the main features of the dominant value systems - the way we live:

- We have a belief in progress which is related to the idea of continous improvement in material living standards. This includes the view that in general terms our current way of life is better than that of our ancestors and that today the lives of the rich are better than those of the poor.

- We see progress primarily as involving an increase in material possessions and improved access to services. We define standard of living in these terms.

- We tend to regard looking after our own individual standard of living and that of our families as being of the greatest importance. The needs of the 'less well off' and future generations are viewed as being of lesser importance. Our societies are competitive and hierarchical. Greed is a powerful element of the culture. We think well of those who are trying to 'better themselves' in terms of wealth and improved access to services. Our main role models are people who are wealthy and powerful or successful in sport and the arts. The existence of rich and poor and advantaged and disadvantaged nations and groups is accepted as a part of the natural order of things.

- We see ourselves as being a very special creature separate from 'the environment' including from other living things.

- We view the environment as primarily having utilitarian or instrumental value; as being a never ending reservoir of resources which we can use to satisfy our ever growing material wants;

- Our economies are based on maximising production and consumption in the belief that we can go on expanding our appropriation of resources and go on expanding our populations and their consumption without end. We do not accept that there are limits to such growth. Economic growth is the given principal objective of development in every country and the universal measure of government success;

- We believe in our ingenuity to overcome any problem resulting from the physical degradation of the environment and the exhaustion of resources. As a result we play down the environmental crisis which in reality is akin to an avalanche gathering speed and volume as it progresses down hill.

A2 HOW OUR GOALS ARE ACHIEVED (MAIN INSTITUTIONS FOR DECISION MAKING).

- The primary arrangements (institutions, policies, arguments, etc) for gaining access to resources and facilitating production and consumption, so satisfying the prevailing value systems including the concept of progress, are as follows (see also Lowe, in Goldie, Douglas and Furnass (2005), and Wells and Connor 2005)):

  - trade is on a global basis and involves long distance transport of goods including foodstuffs;

  - Because of the economies derived from large scale production, and concentration of energy supply and other services half the world's population live in cities;

  - private capital including money supplied by banks is accumulated and used to fund resource development;

  - value is primarily a market consideration and market economics determine land use and the trade in resources. The costs in terms of environmental degradation are either ignored or given little weight;

  - fear is exploited as a means of reinforcing and enforcing the dominant value system. The posssesion, threatened use and actual use of military force is a major factor in ensuring compliance including ensuring access to resources. Nations, communities and individuals seeking to resist these forces also develop military capability and engage in punitive actions leading in turn to a 'war on terror';

  - global, multilateral and bi-lateral agreements and institutions have been developed to provide for more orderly and less risky means of applying dominant value systems than force. They apply to trade, management of resources, limitation of military build ups, peaceful settlement of disputes and mitigation through regulation of adverse environmental effects of activities;

  - Gross National Product (GNP) - the dollar value of goods and services produced - is used as the main measure of economic well being;

  - the physical resources, cheap labour and lower standards for protecting the environment (including occupational health) of the developing world are exploited by the developed world (industrialised nations);

  - arguments used by the developed world for pursuing economic growth and prosperity include the argument that through the trickle down effect this will benefit the poor, including the poorer nations, and help eliminate poverty;

  - developing nations are not expected to be bound by the

same environmental rules as developed nations. Exceptions made for the latter create havens for labour exploitation and pollution;

- Government is centralised and people feel cut off from major individual decisions because they have no say on them;

- political systems are such that they allow no choice of an alternative to the prevailing value systems.

- Current trends include:

  - strengthening of the power of the private sector through privatisation, corporatisation and deregulation. Private ownership encourages a selfish outlook geared to short term objectives and returns. Strengthened business interests exert pressure in favour of increased economic and population growth, lowering of environmental standards and weakening of environmental laws and policies, including employment conditions. Some Australian Governments are moving to water down the planning, environment and industrial relations policies and laws introduced in the 1970s and 1980s;

  - global agreements and institutions relating to environmental protection are being undermined by the self-interested actions of dominant 'first world' nations as actions are taken (including through global trade agreements) to secure markets and access to resources. For instance dominant nations maintain nuclear arsenals. Fearing attack, nations lacking nuclear weapons move to obtain them making nuclear proliferation very difficult to control except by force thereby increasing the risk of war including nuclear war. Global nuclear disarmament goals become less attainable;

  - policies for protecting national industries and environments (eg through tariffs or subsidies) are under attack by trade liberalisation forces. Such arrangements are criticised as barriers to trade. Arguments for removing such barriers include providing improved access for trade from developing countries.

  - challenges to the current hegemony are increasingly seen as requiring greater security in the form of increased policing, military interventions, intervention to establish favourable regimes, puppet Governments, etc. Such actions are portrayed as being to control weapons and also to defend democracy, freedom, etc even where they limit self determination;

  - there is growing interest at all levels in alternative energy systems in response to growing awareness of: a) fossil fuel resources ruuning out; and b) likely adverse environmental effects of fossil fuel use. With regard to b) this concern is focussed on climate change in a way which is distracting attention from the way

in which energy-fuelled economic growth has much wider adverse environmental effects.

A 3 CONSEQUENCES AND EFFECTS: ENERGY

- At the present rate, because of the committment to economic growth, primary energy demand is expected to increase by 60% over the next 25 years.

- Energy is primarily treated as a supply and security problem. Where there is awareness of problems relating to a particular energy source (depletion or adverse environmental effects) the main approach is to look for a techno-fix solution which will meet the projected increase in demand. The assumption is that the demand must be met. It is being argued by some that we need to provide base load power from nuclear energy development because there is insufficient time to build up supply from renewable energy sources. The consequence is that the argument then focusses on which of the two sources - fossil fuel and nuclear - is the least hazardous. The moral problem of bequeathing hazardous waste to future generations is not a major factor in the debate. Attempting to tackle the immediate impacts associated with fossil fuel use by means of a carbon tax without giving due weight to the long term waste disposal problems of nuclear energy is likely to favour the latter alternative.

- The alternative of achieving major reductions in demand for energy is not receiving serious consideration although there are attempts being made to cut use through increased efficiencies at the individual user level. Most renewable energy developments are 'add ons' to energy production, not substitutes. Current renewable energy efforts are miniscule compared with what would be needed to cut global carbon dioxide levels to pre-industrial levels, or, say, to double pre-industrial levels, while at the same time providing for the estimated increase in world population to 9 billion by 2050 and increased per capita energy use in the developing world.

- the move to develop renewable energy solutions is impeded by the low price of the alternatives of fossil fuel and uranium based energy, by the high set up and operation costs (including use of fossil fuel based energy at both stages) and by insensitivity of companies and regulators to problems of any adverse environmental effects.

- Australia is exporting massive amounts of coal, gas, and uranium with no regard for the adverse environmental effects of their use. The idea is that this is someone else's problem.

A 4 CONSEQUENCES AND EFFECTS: OTHER ASPECTS OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Our way of life is dependant upon non-replaceable stock resources such as fossil fuels, soils etc which are being rapidly run down. We are also degrading the earth's environments in major ways. The earth's biota is under massive attack. Pressure on natural systems is ever increasing. As populations and consumption grow forests are being cut beyond the rate of renewal

and altered in composition, catchments are being degraded, water systems are being affected by salinity and unnatural build up of sediments, ecosystems are being disturbed and simplified as species and populations are depleted or exterminated. Fisheries are in decline in many places as a result of overfishing or pollution;

- There is little awareness at government level of the magnitude of the rate of resource exhaustion and environmental degradation and how increasing demands are likely to converge with diminished supply to create environmental disaster and hence no sense of urgency. A 3% annual increase in production is equivalent to a doubling of output every 23 years. The only major concerns are about oil stocks running out and the effect on climate of the so-called greenhouse effect. These concerns appear to take attention away from the wider problem of which they are symptomatic;

- Waste is accumulating and land fill sites are running out:

- Water use is expanding beyond the capacity of streams and dams to supply it, in some cases to the point of terminating river flow and destroying wetlands. There are programmes to reduce use through efficiencies, etc but we do not seriously consider cutting back on the number of consumers as a solution. Typically neither Melbourne nor Sydney (both facing future water shortages) have considered capping their populations. Sydney is taking the opposite drastic step of building a fossil fuel powered desalination plant;

- Because we regard the land primarily as a source of commodities for domestic use or export (ie as business venues) we do not consider the long term consequences of its use;

- Most of the world's resources are being consumed by about one-fifth of its inhabitants living in the western industrialised nations. Poorer people generally have a lower impact on the environment (smaller 'footprint') except where they are being pushed into unsuitable marginal lands including national parks and nature reserves where the impact is devastating. As other countries such as China and India aspire to western standards an increase in consumption and production by some six times present levels is predicted. This is already apparent in the 17% per annum increase in petrol consumption in China and the large number of nuclear power plants under construction there;

- The principle of comparative advantage applied to land use and production and trade in raw materials and manufactured goods results in the development of monocultures and low paid work forces;

- Low cost transport based on the low price of fossil fuels facilitates the urbanisation of the world's populations and the growth of cities to levels which are dependant on food and materials transported over great distances.

## A 5 CONSEQUENCES AND EFFECTS: THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

- Even though in terms of environmental sustainability the world is overpopulated, many populations are continuing to grow rapidly and there are few plans to curb the growth even in some of the poorest countries. It is argued that improved standards of living will lead to lower family sizes. In Australia most States are planning to increase their populations (Melbourne by one million by 2030) and Governments take the view that this is necessary for economic growth. When environmental objections are raised to projects such as extending the life of a coal fired power station, the high priority given to maintaining economic development including employment, whatever the coat, brings forth the mantra "we cannot afford not to".

- Most people lead lives which as a result mainly of urbanisation are cut off from the physical environment. The result is, as one author put it, a loss of "instinctual knowledge".

- The proportion of the world's population living in urban conditions (currently 50%) is continuing to rise.

- Most travel is by systems dependant upon fossil fuel energy. Only a small proportion of travel in most cities is by the more efficient public transport (Melbourne about 9%, Sydney about 8%).

- There are serious trade imbalances between nations. Trade liberalisation policies run counter to efforts to protect home industry, employment, labour conditions and environments. They facilitate resource exploitation, the development of moncultural land uses and economies based on international trade at the expense of more diverse and more environmentally sustainable forms of land use related to local needs.

- Australia's immigration programme is focussed on economic development (skills) instead of global rehabilitation.

- Many people (as distinct from Governments and corporations) do not feel secure about their present and future prospects. Those living in war torn and environmentally ravaged areas suffer from a severe feeling of insecurity. The reliance on military force to achieve security is distracting attention from more basic security resulting from achieving healthier environments.

- The reliance on military means of achieving security results in a tremendous demand for materials, diverting resources from environmental improvement and making sustainability more difficult to achieve.

- While per capita consumption in the West continues to increase there is widespread poverty in the developing world. Efforts to alleviate poverty focus on debt relief, non-targeted aid and incorporating poverty stricken countries into world trade systems. Economic growth in developing countries is supported on the basis of the necessity to overcome poverty and achieve greater equity. It is argued that we cannot reasonably deny the poor countries the right to grow economically when that is and has been the salient goal of the developed world, even though

growth in both spheres will increase the burden on the earth's support systems to intolerable levels.

- The Labor movement (trade unions and labour oriented political parties) share the same basic philosophies of economic development and support for market competition as business interests and business-oriented governments. They do not oppose practices which are environmentally unsound (for instance cutting down of old growth forests) and are largely ineffective in opposing restructuring and offshoring developments aimed at reducing production costs and increasing the scale of production.

- At elections voters are not presented with a choice of voting for a sustainable society or for voting on individual measures. In the run up to elections parties publicise their platforms but in them 'the environment' is portrayed in a narrow sense as being one of a number of issues; something separate from things like 'health', 'the economy', 'education', etc. The major political parties focus their attention on the period up to the next election. Except for the minority Greens (who may or may not embrace the reforms necessary for a steady state society) the members of the public have nowhere to turn to except through individual actions and changing their personal lifestyles (eg 'downsizing').

- The environmental conservation movement is largely single issue oriented and reactive. It spends most of its time dealing with the symptoms of our unsustainable way of life endeavouring to mitigate and minimise the effects of this by tackling each effect separately. There is criticism of the overall adverse effects of our way of life and monitoring of the degradation but, appearing to be trapped in a time warp, it is moving to embrace the tackling of causes at the pace of an ailing snail. Little effort is being put into developing a practical vision for a steady state society and synoptic long term strategic solutions in the framework of a whole of history and a whole of world view. The movement appears to be uncomfortable thinking about ideas for social reform which differ fundamentally from the existing unsustainable value system. The ACF, for instance, has decided to expand its role to tackle cause as well as symptoms but is similarly slow to act. Better to take things basically as they are and adjust around the edges appears to be the prevailing mood. The fear is expressed that if we work for radical solutions we could lose public support (see Christoff 2005). The attidude involves a mix of the three 'ds' - discomfort, distraction (eg with single issues) and (by some) denial that the problem is that big. The focus on single issues (eg water, forests, etc) by the conservation movement is probably helping to extend our unsustainable way of life by reinforcing the illusion, promoted by business and government, that it can be managed in this way (ie by attending to symptoms and making adjustments here and there). There is often division in the movement between those who favour compromise over an issue because of 'political realities' and those who do not. The compromise viewpoint often undermines those who favour a more ideal remedy. There has been some broadening of the scope of environmentalism with social justice being included. On the other side of the coin there is a growing voice for the argument that to achieve sustainability we

will need to extend resource appropriation to include parts of the environment previously protected (scraping the barrel). The opposite point of view which is also beginning to be expressed is that these past and present achievements in conservation can be the springboard for the move to a steady state environment.

- Media discourse focuses on current events, single issues (eg water shortages, climate change, terrorist acts, etc) and short term relief measures for the effects of our current way of life, including techno-fixes, reduced use, and recycling and fails to provide a forum to address causes and options for change in our way of life.

- Overpopulation, habitat destruction, close living and rapid transportation have increased the risks of pandemics.

## B. GETTING THERE (HOW) - PATHWAY TO A STEADY STATE SOCIETY

### INTRODUCTION

With one or two notable exceptions there is not a lot of literature on how we can move from an economic growth obsessed society living on natural capital to a steady state society living as part of the ongoing processes of nature. The main exception is the work of Herman Daly and an essential text is his *The Steady State Economy: Towards a Political Economy of Biophysical Equilibrium and Moral Growth.* This was originally published in 1971 but later revised and expanded (see Daly 1973). In an earlier era ACF sponsored a lecture visit to Melbourne by Daly.

Most commentators agree that we cannot achieve a steady state environment without a fundamental change of values. Because of the extreme and entrenched nature of the current profligate society the change will constitute an environmental revolution.

The starting point for reform is one which is already very difficult; of populations living in a degraded world whose life support systems are undergoing continuing deterioration. Because of past and present excesses the situation will get worse before the moves towards a steady state begin to take effect. If it is allowed to continue unchecked it will be more difficult to remedy. The choice is between strong measures now in an ever growing crisis situation versus future emergency action in the context of future catastrophe. Hence the sooner we start the better.

Start we must NOW because there is probably a point of no return of consumption outstripping resources as far as being able to make an orderly transition to a steady state is concerned and it is very close. We must begin with a vision, a set of goals and agreement on the tangible steps to be taken.

Since a change of values is the key, those who are providing leadership need to do two things simultaneously: 1) show the unsustainable nature of the current way of life which is dependant on endless appropriation of the earth's resources and places faith in our technical ingenuity to deal with any consequence; and 2) show the advantages for all life forms of the creative sustainable relationship with the environment which would apply in a steady state society.

Central to the change of values is a move away from self interest towards a different relationship with the whole environment. Aldo Leopold surely had something like this in mind when he wrote - *when we see the land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.*

### B I OUR VALUES, BELIEFS AND GOALS

While the change in values will need to be comprehensive and united by a single main philosophy (environmentalism) it is not going to happen over night and in the transition the following are some of the main elements for action:

- Our committment to inter and intra-generational ethics is strengthened. We increasingly accept that this will require a major redistribution of wealth and a reduction in material living standards for those who are currently 'better off'.

- We move towards an outlook which sees life as having purpose and meaning from activities beyond material growth and wealth accumulation. It involves the quest for a more creative way of life, one providing a reconnection with nature. Market values are increasingly rejected. We become more careful when we buy something. Cooperation replaces competition as a primary theme of interacting (see Pinzone 2005).

- the undoing of past harm to the environment is seen as very important. As Al Gore (1992) put it *rescue of the environment* is made *the central ongoing principle for civilisation.*

- Environmental education increasingly convinces people that the environment is as all encompassing and broad as life itself, not a separate sector of our existence. It includes all aspects of our social being. We not only live in the land but see ourselves as a part of it.

- We strengthen the thinking which accepts subjective values as important.

B 2 HOW OUR GOALS ARE ACHIEVED (MAIN INSTITUTIONS FOR THE TRANSITION)

Essentially a new set of policies and institutions will be needed to replace those which facilitate the current unsustainable way of life by encouraging growth in resource exploitation, production and consumption. They will be concerned with phasing out market competition and with bringing excessive global trade to an end. The new institutions will be geared towards progressively achieving greater equity, stability, sustainability, restoration/reconstruction and environmental education. The following are some of the necessary transitional changes:

- The movement towards private and corporate ownership of resources and labour is reversed in favour of ownership by the people (through their governments).

- Early attention is paid to the phasing out of foreign ownership.

- soils, water, forests, swamps, coastlines, and other critical areas are treated as public assets.

- Market and profitability criteria are replaced as the means for determining resource and land use by sustainability and environmental care criteria administered by the people through their governments. Power is taken from the stock market and given back to the people.

-The boundaries of states are adjusted to make them more

environmentally sustainable; This can be done in a number of ways including through merging and political unions.

- the size of major urban concentrations are reduced over time through planning and decentralisation.

- Global institutions are given greater respect and change their emphasis to proactive moves to achieve sustainable governance, elimination of power politics, redistribution of wealth and disarmament. Moves to diasarm, with internationally arbitrated targets, include the elimination of nuclear weapons.

- Self sufficiency for each ecoregion is accepted as a better principle for achieving sustainability than trade liberalisation based on market economics.

- As part of the environmental rehabilitation and reconstruction effort conditional financial and food aid is used to help achieve sustainabilty, focussing initially on the areas most at risk of further deterioration. Alex Colley (2004) discusses five means of funding resource conservation. Internationally,the programme operates on the basis of: 1) identifying the critical areas and needs; 2) the development of strategies and action plans; and 3) the marshalling of the forces for implementation. It is based on programmes mutually acceptable to donors, recipients and the specialist bodies taking part in diagnosis, arbitration, and monitoring. Al Gore in his *Earth in Balance* (1992) wrote of this as the need for a 'Global Marshall Plan'.

- A decentralised multi-tiered system of governance is developed with built in arrangements to ensure long term thinking and decision making. The crippling influence which business has over government is removed. Government increasingly sees its role as being to interact with the public in discussing ways of increasing understanding of the environment and ways of living sustainably. Political parties are encouraged to outdo one another with regard to support for such programmes and for partnership arrangements between the different tiers of government and between governments and people and abandon their representation of particular sectors of the community (workers, business and rural).

- The common interests of the different parts of the environment and social justice movements are realised as they recognise their mutual interest in leading the move to a steady state society, and saving humans and other parts of the environment from the forces which threaten to destroy it.

- Groups and citizens work together as one and develop plans for cooperation which help to build up political will.

- The trade unions come to realise that their real interest lies not in being tied to the interests of expoitative entrepreneurs but in a move towards a steady state society involving self sufficient communities and states.

- Rules are put in place to ensure the removal of bias from the media.

B 3 CONSEQUENCES AND EFFECTS: ENERGY

The main need will be to as rapidly as possible cut back on overall energy use and replace reliance on fossil fuels with benign renewable energy sources (ie ones which do not have any adverse environmental effects). This will need to be done in a global context so that there are no pollution havens. There will be a place in such strategies for a transition to renewables by way of less damaging types of fossil fuels, including exports of the latter as long as this is part of a deliberate transition strategy and involves ultimate cutting of dependance on trade. Reductions in overall energy use and changes in types of energy will have major ramifications for populations (size and distribution) and must be planned as a whole with ambitious but achievable targets. The main features of the transition are expected to be: a) a substantial cut back in overall energy use; b) the development of clean energy technologies in a manner which meets the needs of smaller, dispersed populations to the point where, in a steady state environment, there will be total reliance on renewable resources (ie drawing on the on-going processes of nature) without avoidable environmental disturbance;

- Fossil fuel energy sources will need to be rapidly phased out because of: a) the way they help maintain unsustainable economic growth; b) reliance on resources which are finite; and c) the pollution they cause. With regard to the greenhouse effect, as a guide, there will need to be an initial target of reducing carbon dioxide emission levels to, say, not more than twice pre-industrial levels;

- It is made clear that the choice is not between one environmentally damaging base-load power source and another (fossil fuel, nuclear fission or fusion) but between any one of these and saving the planet by reducing power use overall. The nuclear fission option is also unacceptable because of the way it: a) helps to maintain unsustainable economic growth; b) relies on the finite resource of uranium, c) has radiation and waste disposal problems, and d) has dangers with regard to nuclear weapons. Most of these problems would also apply to nuclear fusion.

B 4 CONSEQUENCES AND EFFECTS: OTHER ASPECTS OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

In general there will need to be a fundamental change in the relationship humans have with their environment. A shift is needed from reliance on the 'natural capital' developed over millions of years to use of the on-going processes of nature.('the natural interest'). Such an approach, will have to take account of the needs of the other living inhabitants of the planet, including their recovery from mankind's past depredations. There are many consequences of this new approach including the development of a culture of reuse. For instance, building materials are reused or recycled as cities decline in size. Some things to work for include: zero waste; greater durability of products; and restoration of catchments, habitats and soils (a long process).

## B 4 CONSEQUENCES AND EFFECTS: THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

In the long term the development of new institutions, policies, laws and governance modes will have tremendous consequences for individuals, families, where people live, how they make their living, etc. The following is a far from comprehensive list of some of the changes which are likely to occur in a gradual way over several generations and with the agreement of the great majority of the people.

- Our ethical standards will improve with the abandonment of the habit of accepting morally reprehensible solutions such as trade-offs which involve sacrificing one aspect of the environment for another because of the belief that it involves less damage. Proposals to be resisted will include compromises which enable cities to grow beyond sustainability such as when new dams are built for water supply even though these rob down stream areas, lakes, etc of riparian flows, or when water desalination plants using fossil fuel sourced energy are proposed, or when shipping channels are deepened at the expense of marine life.

- Equity becomes a major consideration, with new means introduced to facilitate it (eg rationing of food, carbon emissions, etc). Disparities in access to services such as health and education will be progressively removed.

- Employment opportunities in environmental repair and environmental education will expand.

- Population growth will be halted (see Daly 1973 and the Chinese one child per family example).

- There will be a massive investment in public transport and an increase in the proportion of trips taken by public transport.

- Planning will aim to reduce the size of cities and reduce the time spent on the journey to work.

- Measures will be introduced to increase sharing of work, if necessary by setting limits on the length of time worked (eg French 35 hour week legislation).

- Measures will be introduced to phase out private ownership of land (eg ACT law banning freehold).

- A new measure of sustainability and well being will replace GNP/GDP.

- The development of import replacement programmes will be fostered (initially using tariffs and susidies) so that local needs are as far as possible met from local supplies (reducing transport costs and securing employment).

- Military based solutions to security will be replaced by environmental security and the resources so released will be redeployed into environmental rehabilitation programmes and social adjustments to foster sustainable living.

- Steps will be taken, if necessary by regulation, to ensure that in the media steady state commentators are given as much time/space as pro-growth economic rationalist commentators and that the discourse considers ends as well as means.

- It will be accepted that the environment movement has a critical leadership role to play in the move to a steady state society.

- The environment movement for its part, if it can be activated, is the best hope that we have for initiating the move to a steady state environment. It will need to accept that effects-oriented work is useful if done in harness with effort on behalf of a steady state society. It will understand that every social change movement has had a small beginning. It, and its constituent bodies like the ACF, accept that they can be the midwives (catalysts) of a larger movement (see Task Force 2025 reports, 1996-97). The movement accepts that the mission is dangerous, that the task requires boldness (a willingness to take risks), endurance, and faith in its ability to build alliances and succeed. The movement will accept the dangers involved whilst attempting to minimise the risks. It also accepts that it will initially need to endure ridicule and accusations of extremism and court actions and endure worse when those who benefit most from the current unsustainable way of life feel that their interests are seriously threatened. The situation will need to be treated like a war with battles on many fronts. The movement will need to have a realistic understanding of all the obstacles, including likely attitudes both within and without, such as complacency, false hope, greed, the desire to prolong comfort, fear of a loss of standard of living, apathy, sense of powerlessness ('the problem is too big', 'failure is inevitable'). An answer is needed for everyone of these attitudes. Above all the movement needs a strategy and an action plan to win this war. The following are some of the necessary elements for such a plan:

    - a publicity campaign which stresses: a) the current rate of environmental degradation (there is already a crisis); b) forecasts for resource depletion; c) the transition may be *traumatic* (as Coombs (1972) put it) but it is going to be touch and go whether we can escape total destruction. Making the change gradually is better than living in a catastrophic situation. 'Business as usual' is not a realistic option; d) reducing/minimising adverse effects is not enough. Although an important part of the move to a steady state society, whether achieved through individual consumer choice or regulation, these actions in themselves cannot change the destructive course we are on; e) making the change is not just a matter for experts, people must seize back their futures; f) above all the point must be made that the steady state society offers a better quality of life and is achievable (the good news); g) That militarism is a product of our expansionist way of life and is a part of the problem and that only the steady state society will provide real security. The campaign will need to appeal to people's sense of community and charity and inspire the thought that this is the mission

of our time;

- As recommended by Charles Birch we institute an Auswatch (compare World Watch) to monitor the move to a steady state society, complementing State of the Environment and ABS reporting;

- The movement makes sure that it understands its opposition and their arguments and develops and publicises answers;

- The development of education programmes which build on the environmental successes of the past and which, for instance, use national parks as educational centres and rallying grounds. We argue that these places, which belong to all the people, demonstrate our capacity for success - we start from these marks;

- It is accepted that a great diversity of contributions, actions and approaches are needed in the movement for both cause and effect work and that there is a role for all including the timid and those not immediately convinced of the need for major social change (symptom-oriented work will still be needed and will increasingly be concerned also with particular facets of achieving the steady state society);

- The plan will need to include measures for dealing with the redundant institutions that have been developed to facilitate our current unsustainable way of life. Most will need to be either replaced or undergo a role change. Early action is advisable because these are likely to move against the steady state movement even before it begins to win mass support, using every trick in the book and others.

- Australia will play a leading role in the international move to a steady state society, disengaging itself from the coalition of nations which enforce global capitalism after recognising that in the long run environmental security has more to offer than the propping up of an unsustainable system and the hope of future military protection being provided by an alliance with the USA.

## C. OUTLINE MODEL FOR A STEADY STATE SOCIETY

### INTRODUCTION

It will help us to imagine what a steady state environmentally - oriented society would be like if we think of the main features of our current unsustainable scociety, its values and in particular the way it relates to the environment. In every substantial way the steady state alternative will be its opposite.

The new society is profoundly different to industrial and so-called post industrial societies. We will recognise in it many of the features of hunter gatherer societies, particularly those related to community and environment. It is equitable, creative, cooperative, plurocratic, and environmentally sustainable. It is a stable but not static society. The dynamic processes of nature continue and this includes humans. The conditions are such that creativity flourishes. As John Stuart Mill wrote in 1848, when he envisaged what such a society would be like: *there would be as much room for improving the Art of Living and much more likelihood of its being improved, when minds ceased to be engrossed by the art of getting on.* (*Principles of Political Economy*).

### C1 OUR VALUES, BELIEFS AND GOALS

- Long lost values have been recovered. They are based on the very high priority we give to enjoying a harmonious relationship with the environment, which means with each other, with other living things and with the dynamic physical environment. We no longer use natural capital or stock resources. Instead we obtain products such as the materials for food, shelter and travel from natural processes in a manner which minimises disturbance and recognises the dependancies and linkages in natural ecosystems and the inevitability of natural change in climate, earth movements, erosion, living things,etc.

- The term 'the environment', now embraces all aspects of human social and economic of life. We have names for the often linked components of the environment and for environmental difference.

- Our spiritual relationship with the other components of the environment is now very important in everyones lives. The egocentric/anthropocentric approach to the environment is history. It has been replaced by a ecocentric/biocentric ethic. There is a reverence for life and a feeling of kinship with the earth as well as with other people, our ancestors and future generations. We view the earth as something we belong to and treat it as we would our own family.

- We see ourselves as having particularly close links with the places where we live but our concern extends to the wider region and to the welfare of the whole planet.

We gain our sense of well being from the contribution we can make to the environment including our communities and from creative activities. The concepts of progress and success in terms of

material advancement, and the gaining of power have long since been abandoned. People are accepted for who they are and it is recognised that this includes a vast range of difference. We take pleasure and satisfaction from noting how others lead their lives to the full and this includes helping those affected by infirmities and accidents.

C2 HOW OUR GOALS ARE ACHIEVED (MAIN INSTITUTIONS FOR DECISION MAKING ETC SEE ALSO C3-5)

- The following are some key principles which are used for decision making, policy setting, etc: 1) equity in access to rersources is guaranteed; 2) sustainability is integral to all actions; 3) our relationship with the environment is benign; 4) allocation of resources and consumption is based on needs and environmental sustainability not wants; 5) competition has been replaced by cooperation, and 5) decision making and policy setting are open and fully participatory processes.

- The division of units for government is environmentally based. The system involves a range of governance ecounits and institutions from local through regional, national super regions (groupings of nations) to global. They manage land and resources within their respective areas in an integrated fashion. Citizens vote not just on the selection of representives to assemblies but on individual policy proposals and decisions. Other projects and problems are discussed at peoples' forums.

- There are no standing military or police forces. Military security was made unnecessary by the achievement of environmental security following the introduction of environmentally conscious living (elimination of inequality and competition), in other words, real security.

- The accepted concept of standard of living reflects societal values. It is pretty much as envisaged by Bob Brown at an ACF Conference in 1988 (see Neville 1990): It *means the freedom of education, the freedom to be healthy, the freedom to be able to aspire to experience as much as you can of other people and this planet while you exist here, and to strive for the betterment of the planet for the future. In other words... a standard of living in terms of fulfillment in life, in happiness through knowing we are participating in an ongoing fantastic human and life presence on this planet.*

There is no private ownership of land, water, airspace or human modifications such as buildings and roads. People have a role in environmental management through the close relationship they enjoy with particular areas.

C3 CONSEQUENCES AND EFFECTS: ENERGY

- Society derives all its energy from natural flows (sun, wind, river flow, tides, waves, and thermal, etc) in a manner which causes minimum interference with environmental processes and other living things.

C4 CONSEQUENCES AND EFFECTS: OTHER ASPECTS OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Water (riverine, estarine and marine) is managed to ensure that the needs of other parts of the environment (natural procesees including other living things) are not adversely affected by human activities such as water storage and withdrawal.

- The adverse human impacts of past human use such as the cutting down of forests, land degradation, the damage to wildlife populations and ecosystems, the pollution of air and water are being progressively restored.

C5 CONSEQUENCES AND EFFECTS: THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT,

- Populations are in balance in number and distribution with the resources sustainably available in the places where people live (ie with carrying capacity). Local economies are diverse. Each community is to a large extent self-sufficient with trade being limited to the minimum necessary within regions. Population policies are set by government processes (see C2 above).

- Work is on the basis of acting on a sense of responsibility towards community values and goals. Life styles are simple. The incentives for effort in employment are the sense of well being which comes from engagement with the environment in the fields of production, repair, and creativity of all kinds including the arts, sport, etc. Work is commonly shared.

- The distinction between work and recreation has largely disappeared. There is challenge and stimulus in creativity and environmental exploration. Travel is motivated largely by the urge to discover and learn about the environment. Most people live within walking or cycling distance of where they work and use services.

- Education is organised by the community, is free and is aimed primarily at increasing personal and environmental awareness.

- Settlements are on a human scale with cities not being above an level optimal for the provision of services.

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