

SWITCHBOARD

FREE

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COMMUNITY SWITCHBOARD
24 Ryerson #309, 868-0113

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one block north of Queen, one block east of Bathurst

Community Switchboard offers a forum and research facilities to those concerned with analyzing the need for basic social change and establishing an alternative social system, economically and ecologically sound, whose principles of small-scale technology, self and co-operative employment and human-scaled social units will contrast with those of the corporate state. Anyone who shares these goals is invited to contact the Switchboard to discuss means of working together towards achieving them.

OFFICE HOURS: The Switchboard is usually open Tuesday thru Saturday afternoons. Spontaneous visits are always welcome, but visitors wishing to verify the office being open are invited to phone in advance.



Weds March 19, 7:30 pm: El Salvador Information Evening with FMLN-FDR delegate Pedro Cedillos, Trinity St. Pauls Church 427 Bloor West.

8 pm-Canada, NORAD and the Star Wars System. West Hall, University College-U of T. Info 978-5217.

8 pm-Toronto Anti-Intervention Coalition presents a Latin American-Caribbean benefit at the Bamboo, 312 Queen W. Tickets \$4-5. Information 599-9409.

Fri March 21 4:30 pm: Rally Against Racism assemblies at South African consulate King & Bay, proceeds to Ontario Human Rights Commission.

8:30-Dance Against Apartheid featuring

Info and tickets: 534-0449, 532-3150.

8-Gala, inter-generation group providing care and support for gays and lesbians as they age, holds regular general meeting at 519 Church St.

7-ACT Coffeehouse, 139 Robert. Dr. Andrew Blackwell on "The Peace Movement as Adult Education." Free. At 9 pm. Willie P. Bennet sings. \$3.

Sat March 22: Canadian Dance for Nicaragua, with Prairie Oyster, Ukranian Labour Temple 300 Bathurst St, 8 p.m. Information: Canadian Action for Nicaragua.

1pm film: Behind the Veil, Nuns free at 519 Church.

TOWARD A GREEN PROGRAMME FOR TORONTO

excerpts from an article by Don Alexander in March issue of Up From the Ashes (\$1.25/copy from the Emma Goldman Resource Group PO Box 5811 Stn A To M5W 1P2.)

A bold new initiative by the environmental and citizens' movements is needed today...environmental and community groups are fractionalized, each fighting their own localized battles without the benefit of broad support. The consequence? These groups are sustaining defeats. Witness the "tidal pool" project proposed by Metro on Hanlon's Point, or the giving over of parts of Leslie Spit to the boat clubs and city marinas. The city is riddled with groups fighting righteous battles: Save Our Island Homes, Save the Rouge Valley, Stop the Spadina Extension, Homes Not Domes, anti-railway lands development, anti-Doctor's Hospital expansion, Foodshare, preservation of Ontario foodlands, anti-pollution (Riverdale, Junction Triangle), cleaning up Lake Ontario and a host of other issues.

Meanwhile, it's "business-as-usual" in municipal (and provincial/federal) politics. Environmental and community concerns are ignored (as in the recent decision to submit the proposal for a liquified natural gas plant near Grafton to the Ontario Energy Board, instead of to an environmental assessment hearing), and those who would voice these concerns are marginalized. The Green Party which promised to be the vehicle which would unite all these concerns in the form of a common programme ignominiously blew its chances by running for election before they had even created a base for themselves, and is now virtually ignored by people interested in serious Green organizing...

We need a network for sharing information and resources where local concerns would be channelled into a central body (to be reflected in a common programme), and resources and advice would, in turn, be channelled back out to help grassroots movements at the local level. Initially, the planning council would form groups and individuals across the city who had shown an interest in building a municipal Green movement. These people would get together to research and discuss social issues and concerns currently agitating environmental and community groups, and would cull from their common elements a statement of aims (expressing the principles of human scale, natural and cultural diversity, and

grassroots democracy which underlie such struggles, and could serve as a philosophical basis for unifying them. They would also draw up a rough vision paper describing the kind of city that these struggles imply if carried to full fruition, and contrast this vision of a human scale Toronto (say, in the year 2000) with the monstrosity planned by the real estate sharks and their buddies in City Hall. Furthermore, they would make an effort to systematize these issues into a platform of demands, to be implemented where possible at the grassroots level, and to be inserted into municipal political debate as a standard against which to measure the politicians' performance...

Once a statement of philosophy, a "vision paper", and a platform have been drawn up, the alternative planning council could approach local groups about the possibility of forming a coalition or alliance with these documents (in modified form) serving as their basis of unity. Meetings of the alliance could be held once a month for purposes of exchanging information, planning strategy, and making decisions in a directly democratic fashion (means would have to be found, of course, to prevent special interest groups from stacking the meetings, or to prevent politicians from turning it into their private vote preserve.) Once a firm or grassroots base had been established, intervention in municipal elections could be contemplated, but only on the condition that representatives would be strictly mandated and recallable, and that running for election would not be seen as the main tactic. I personally would argue for an "apolitical" stance where, as with existing organizations like Pollution Probe, the role of the alliance would be one of disseminating information and challenging politicians, and not one of directly running for office...

Let's do what we can on the municipal level (as in the forgoing proposal for a municipal planning council) to democratize political life and inject an ethical orientation into the goals of the "polis," while establishing economic alternatives, on whatever limited a scale, for the purpose of permitting political activists to sustain themselves in a more self-reliant and politically consistent manner, and to serve as models and examples of what a "moral economy" would look like. Obviously we can't create either of these initiatives out of whole cloth--we need to work with (continued page four)

A MUTUAL AID NETWORK ORGANIZING CONFERENCE

co-sponsored by the Alternative Economics Working Group and
Mobilization for Action

will be held Saturday April 19, 10 am-5:30 pm at 519 Church
no charge information 868-0113 all welcome

The basis for a Mutual Aid Network exists in everything from credit unions to food co-ops, from printing collectives to neighbourhood clinics. A formal or semi-formal coalition would help us enhance our own activities and broaden the popular base we depend

upon. In addition to establishing groundwork for forming this Network, the conference will hold workshops on a number of proposals for increasing our economic independence, including establishing a barter system and creating more workers' co-ops.

OPPOSITION TO SEED CONTROL LEGISLATION URGED

Canadian Organic Growers is urging everyone to write Mulroney (with copies to Turner and Broadbent) opposing plans for Plant Breeders' Rights Legislation, which John Wise, federal Minister of Agriculture, recently announced to the Canadian Agricultural Chemical Association that he intends to reintroduce to parliament as soon as possible. The seed control legislation would operate like a patent, giving breeders the rights to royalties (an extra profit on sales) and to set conditions of sale and distribution.

In countries where plant breeders' rights legislation is in effect (USA, Europe) it has given incentive to the centralization of control of seeds by large (primarily petro-chemical) multinational corporations. A handful of giant companies have bought up more than 500 small seed companies which had helped to ensure the

genetic diversity of our seeds through their decentralized breeding programs. While seed patent legislation is not the only cause of the loss of genetic diversity in seeds, it is an accelerating and significant factor.

As an alternative to this legislation, Canadian Organic Growers is promoting a Heritage Seed Program to help maintain vital, diverse genes in Canadian food plants. More information can be obtained through Ken McMullen, 46 Lorindale Avenue, Toronto M5M 3C2.

(editor's note: this is one more example of the need for an alternative planning council such as the one Don Alexander suggests in the accompanying article. Such a council might apply itself to bioregional needs rather than just those in the city of Toronto.)

GREEN PROGRAMME (from page 3)

what exists. One project which would lay the groundwork for achieving both goals would be the establishment of a "Mutual Aid Network" of individuals, organizations, and alternative businesses for purposes of mutual support, and to put out a pole in the community at large. Consisting initially of groups like the Free University and the Community Switchboard, Ecology House, OPIRG, the Big Carrot, Karma Co-op, and Bread and Roses, etc., it would draw up something like a "Bill of Rights" to identify its social aims, and to establish norms of conduct for member organizations. The Bill of Rights could be something like this:

1. The right to free or inexpensive housing.
2. The right to land on which to grow one's own food.
3. The right to an aesthetic environment, including access to unspoiled wilderness.
4. The right to clean air and water.
5. The right to a peaceful planet and the security of one's person.
6. The right to practice one's own culture and spirituality.
7. The right to freedom from sex roles; freedom of sexual orientation.
8. The right to meaningful work of one's own choosing.
9. The right to be artistically active, and to have access to necessary materials

and facilities.

10. The right to free speech and assembly, but most importantly, the right to create and control the human scale institutions which affect one's life.

These would serve as a charter of sorts, agreement with which would serve as a condition for membership. The Network would charge individual and organizational membership dues, and would set these aside to set up community projects, or to aid peoples in struggle like the Navajos at Big Mountain. Members would be expected (after consensus had been achieved at periodic meetings) to participate in agreed-upon campaigns like doing internal education on issues like Big Mountain, anti-LNG, Lyell Island, etc. (using in-store displays, complete with donation cans and free literature.)

A Green dollar system might even be attempted so that, not only would members be encouraged to patronize one another's products and services, but a portion of trade could be conducted in an internal currency. The formation of such a network would thus accomplish two objectives: helping to solidify an alternative economy, and forming an ethically-bonded community which would make its presence and influence felt in the city as a whole. If you have other suggestions or modifications, please write to Up From the Ashes.