The Lodge at Moora Moora Co-operative Community, near Melbourne.

5 Bourgeois Rural Co-operatives

GOOD COUNTRY LIVING

We are looking for an alternative to city life and would like others to join us in developing a rural cooperative style of life. We envisage an integrated community of family groups of all ages, working individually and together to provide a community oriented lifestyle.

SANDRA AND I MOVED OUT of the Moorabbee Commune to the Moora Moora Co-operative Community near Healesville. Such bourgeois rural co-operatives were the next alternative communities to evolve. These were often attempts to allow a number of people with diverse interests the space to live together without an intensity of conflict which threatened the survival of a community.

In recent years, there had been a significant increase in registered social co-operatives, officially called community advancement or settlement societies. By 1972 there were 710. Most of these consisted of alternative community groups. Community settlement societies increased from six in 1974 to ten in 1975. A similar pattern of development existed in the other states.

Co-operative rural communities were a middle ground between going back to the land alone, and being in a rural commune. Although this middle ground was adopted by both rural bourgeois and counter-cultural communities, ideologically co-operatives were bourgeois instruments of community. The co-operative made allowance for individual autonomy. Considerable variation existed in the extent of sharing. What was shared or held in common was usually specified and legalized, and everything else was privately owned.

For an increasing number of those who could afford it, life in the Australian farming and bush countryside became utopia. Weekend farmers and ecologists sometimes came together in small groups to purchase land to share as a holiday place away from the rat-race. Leisure farms were set up on rural properties with the full range of farm animals as well as swimming pools, tennis courts and other affluent appurtenances. City dwellers could come and stay for a week and play

farmer. Camping in the bush was another popular pastime, represented in the *Australian's* story of 'Ninety-Five Families are Moving Into a Family Life Camp in Vic. Alps today in an Attempt to Bridge the Generation Gap.'

The variety of rural bourgeois communities was not great; going onto the land set narrow limits. In most, the members still worked in the city. They were trying to have it both ways, working in the city and living in the country. One such scheme was mounted by a small group of academics at Flinders University, in South Australia, who were committed to their careers. Another attempt was that of a Canberra-based group consisting of three men and two women friends, who had shared university life and an interest in bushwalking and conservation. They had 162 hectares at *Braidwood*, as well as an urban residence. They wanted to live on the land eventually, developing it in accordance with ecological principles. 'We do not expect to make a profit, but wish to manage our affairs wisely and not waste our resources.'

A bourgeois agricultural community that began with American capital was *Rosebud Farm* on the Queensland coast near Cairns. There were at least twenty people who called it home and numerous visitors who were carefully controlled. It was an affluent community with a range of modern equipment, including several tractors, trucks and four-wheel-drive vehicles. Significant for its careful organization, Rosebud Farm had been operating successfully for several years,

A co-operative with more of an ecological interest was *Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative* at Kangaroo Ground on the fringes of Melbourne. It combined practical and ideological motivations. Its social structure was based on the nuclear family, and buildings were clustered together loosely to reduce ecological damage and to cut costs. Its individualistic membership comprised artists and academics, with a predominance of teachers and professionals. The scheme began with 30 hectares and later expanded to 140 hectares, with thirty-two shareholders. The cost per share was $3500. The plan was to develop thirty-two detached houses and garden plots along a ridge in an area near an existing access road.

The co-operative was formed on 2 May 1971, and was registered as a community settlement society. It began with a fanfare of conservation-minded publicity, and it was their environmental concerns that drew members together. As they stated in their registered rules, their objectives were 'to acquire land suitable for conservation and to retain and manage such land for the conservation

of the natural flora, fauna, features and water theron'. However, while conserving it, they also wanted to live on the land. The principles of their organization were well expressed by an ex-chairman of the co-operative:

> Each of the 32 shareholders has equal voting rights no matter how many shares he owns. The shareholders annually elect a board of directors to conduct the day-to-day business of the society. Major decisions are made at general meetings. Any member can put forward policy proposals. The society has appointed convenors, with appropriate specialist skills, to handle particular aspects of the cooperative's development, such as water supply and fire control.

Individual services had priority over community facilities. There was a ban on cats and dogs, and vegetables were to be grown only in small leased garden areas. Exotic trees were not to be planted and the co-operative had to give permission for any tree to be felled. Buildings had to be constructed, where possible, of natural materials, and all plans had to be approved by the co-operative. There were also detailed policies about fire protection, water supply and waste handling.

In the beginning, Round the Bend's membership was diverse, and shares were sold to anyone who wanted to buy. Later, when all shares had been sold, new applicants had to demonstrate active commitment to the co-operative, its aims and its work party activities. Applicants had to be associated with the co-operative and interviewed by the directors before their application was voted on. The elected directors ran the co-operative with meetings once a month, and general meetings were held every three months. This organization and specialization within the co-operative meant that not all members knew what was happening to the co-op as a whole, and that it was mainly the directors who were actively involved.

In the early stages of the co-operative's development there was a rapid turnover in membership. Many of the more radical members sold out because they did not like the co-operative's over-organized nature. However, as a result of its professional membership and their specialized knowledge, the co-operative produced a large amount of detailed information on living with the environment. Round the Bend was instrumental in establishing a new zoning category—the Environmental Living Zone—with restrictions on cats, dogs and the type of development. It was also active in the Bend of Isles Conservation Association.

The co-operative was sufficiently well organized by a small number

of its members to be able to survive and largely fulfil its ecological aims without the active support of the bulk of its membership. The others saw it as either a weekend retreat or a 'nice thing to support'.

Initially members tended to view the co-operatives difficulties as imposed from outside. The Board of Works delayed granting a permit for the project for twelve months. Three years later the co-operative had difficulty in renegotiating the permit. The Board had been sceptical about similar schemes. Likewise the local council restricted the co-operative to building and completing seven houses first, before other permits would be issued. Some members of the Liberal-dominated council became opposed to the co-operative as a result of publicity about the membership of federal Labor Minister for the Environment, Dr Moss Cass. Members of Round the Bend felt that public authorities found it difficult to know how to respond to a 'hippy-type' lifestyle of highly respected professional people, who often knew more about the land, its protection and buildings than their own staff. Authorities often became confused, and either deferred to the ideas of the co-operative, or became irrationally hostile to a 'bunch of academics coming in and telling the council what to do'

New ventures in Tasmania and Victoria pursued the integration of agriculture with conservation under the name of permaculture and the leadership of Bill Mollison. His charismatic leadership has inspired considerable enthusiasm for the possibilities of creating rural co-operatives that synthesize horticulture, animal husbandry and conservation in an ongoing way. In general, bourgeois communities had as many failures as other communities, even with their modest aims, conservative forms and greater resources. They often lacked the zeal to move beyond the discussion of nice ideas into the hard work of making them happen. One failure to 'get off the ground' was in Adelaide:

> I will be having a look over a property with some humanists this Saturday at Concordia about 30 miles from Adelaide north-east, more or less at the start of the Barossa Valley. The area is 50 hectares with a house and dam on the property, mains water passing the property and the price is $55,000 Don't know the area but I've been told that it is beautiful and undulating. Gawler, population around 20,000, is four miles away, has a high school, hospital, and there is a regular train service to Adelaide. Our big problem at this stage is not having a structure which would allow us to buy a property. Yet it does seem that we ought to act fairly quickly to acquire land, otherwise I'm afraid the group will never get past the waffle stage. Also once you've got something concrete to show people it does seem to galvanise people into definite actions.

Unfortunately they did 'waffle' with the result that the original initiator left in disillusionment to travel overseas and learn from successful communities.

Two conservation proposals also failed. The *Burnt Point Company Co-operative Ltd* was initiated by an ex-member of the Round the Bend Co-operative, as a business-cum-community venture: 'The Burnt Point Community Cooperative has been designed for those people who are bird lovers, who want a holiday or retirement or permanent house in close proximity to excellent beaches, who want an interest in a farm, who want enough space for their own garden but not too much.' The man behind this intended to purchase 114 hectares for the conservation of bird life and the development of a small farm. The 104 shareholders would be entitled to build 104 houses in clusters. According to the initiator, the scheme failed because they could not gain a planning permit for the development and also due to the lack of social cohesion amongst the people interested. Another proposal that failed to move beyond the sharing of ideas was the *Urimbirra Co-operative Society Limited*, which was to purchase and conserve 400 hectares of land adjoining the Western Little Desert in Victoria. It was found to be too far from the homes of shareholders for effective conservation and the development of co-operative efforts. The proposal lapsed as the enthusiasm of the thirty intending members waned.

Coromandel Co-operative was the unsuccessful attempt of a group of young, married, professional people, wanting to establish a co-operative community within 45 kilometres of Melbourne. The Coromandel Co-operative wanted a community with ten dwellings, community centre, and 2 hectares of market garden. The site was 40 hectares of 'virgin scrub', abutting the Diamond Creek, midway between Cottlesbridge and St Andrews. The cost was $51 000. The co-operative was to consist of ten members, each entitled to build a dwelling in an approved location and to have use of three-tenths of a hectare. The remaining 37 hectares was to be kept in its natural state for the common use of all shareholders. Coromandel had rules very similar in nature and intent to Round the Bend: an embargo on cats, dogs, exotic trees and plants. Houses were to be located in three clusters, and common services were to include gravelled roads and a waste-handling system. The group held several formal decision-making meetings, beginning in March 1972. Land purchase and permit negotiations were begun with the owner, the Board of Works and the local council. They were moving towards registering as a community settlement society. However, as discussions progressed, several members dropped out, mainly because they did not like the

proposed site. For some, it was too expensive. The proposal lapsed when half of the group left.

The remaining six people then attempted to form a new co-operative. Advertisements were put in *Nation Review*'s D-Notices, and a meeting of twenty-five interested people was convened. Aims of this new group were similar to the previous one. A site of 100 hectares was found near St Andrews, which was for sale at $60 000; it was planned to have twenty-five shareholders. Visits to the site were made and several other meetings were held, mainly attended by professionals, including a number of teachers. However, this group also failed to go to the point of agreeing to purchase a site. Their interests were diverse and they lacked a clear direction.

Those who had left Coromandel were divided in interest between those wanting one hamlet or cluster of houses of eight families, and others wanting a larger, more varied scheme. These two groups went their own ways. The first group attempted to establish a one-cluster community on 1½ hectares at Greensborough. They advertised in *Nation Review*: 'Interested in non-oppressive living for adults and children. Join an eight-family Melbourne suburban co-operative now: individual housing, building soon.' Six couples were interested in obtaining the site. The group was concerned with co-operative child-rearing and community relations while still maintaining a clear private realm. Their ideas for design were drawn from Merchant Builders' cluster development, Winter Park, in Doncaster, Melbourne. There were arguments in the group about the suitability of the Greensborough land, and more couples were needed for finance. The university lecturer who was behind the scheme finally could wait no longer and decided to buy 2 hectares for his family at Kangaroo Ground. This sealed the doom of the group.

The desire for a larger scheme was represented by a small group who had come to the previous Coromandel meetings en masse. They were beginning to explore ideas for a co-operative community of sixty members. Four of this group, including me, were part of the Moorabbee Commune and were seeking ways by which we could establish a more permanent and appropriate lifestyle which could provide us with more privacy and a wider scope for community. Two friends of ours were also involved in discussing these issues with us. These discussions were the beginnings of *Moora Moora Co-operative Community*, a scheme for sixty resident members and twenty non-residents, and their children.

Moora Moora evolved as a result of my studies of ideas, communal experiences and our brief contact with the Coromandel Co-operative.

Instead of a small co-operative of one mould, we wanted a larger group of several communities. A planning group of seven people was formed in May 1972, consisting of Sandra, a school counsellor; myself, a sociologist; Marianne, a secretary; her husband Warwick, an engineer; Richard, an architect; Rodger, an economist; and Robert, an environmental planner. Their ages ranged from mid-twenties to early thirties, and all except Marianne had a tertiary education. I had known Rodger and Richard as friends from church days. Marianne and Warwick came in through their friendship with Rodger.

We held meetings monthly and, at times, fortnightly. At these we thrashed out a manifesto for establishing a co-operative community. It covered ecology, community, finance, organization, education, services and building. Each member of the planning group wrote down his ideas about one of these aspects of the co-operative, and they were critically evaluated by the group and rewritten by another member. As well as clarifying and discussing ideas, we began to gather knowledge about forming a co-operative. We continually discussed difficulties we were likely to face. The two most important seemed to be the way to find members and providing finance for the scheme. By the end of 1972 we had chosen our name, and a graphic symbol was commissioned to represent the nature and aims of the co-operative.

In the early part of 1973, we made tentative attempts to find a site. Robert, Sandra and I went to Adelaide. However, land proved to be not much cheaper than in Melbourne, with a much poorer public transport system, and a shortage of water. We rejected Adelaide because there did not seem to be enough people to get a large co-operative scheme off the ground. As a result, the group decided on Melbourne as the place to create Moora Moora.

The first edition of the manifesto was a co-operative effort compiled from the contributions of all members of the planning group. It was put together in a rush to present publicly to the Victorian Humanist Society in May 1973. In response to this meeting, we swelled our numbers, although some came and went without ever becoming involved. As a new group of fourteen, we spent more time discussing the plan and made a serious effort to look for land. We still had regular meetings.

We registered Moora Moora as a community settlement society on 28 February 1974.[1] There were then only five societies of this kind, of which three were similar to Moora Moora (St Mary's of Maryknoll, a Catholic lay community, and Round the Bend Co-operative). Two years later five others had been registered.

The monumental step for the intending members was taken when,

by a majority, we decided to purchase our land in April 1974. The willingness of people to put money into a risky experimental venture of this kind was an effective sign of their commitment. Three of the original planning group left at this time. Warwick and Marianne felt that the land was inappropriate, as they wanted purely virgin bush. Robert's wife, Ann, could not work at La Trobe University and live at Healesville. For her, work was more important than the environment in which she lived. Robert and Ann dropped out and bought a house in Eltham. Seven others also left the group at this point. Two couples left because of the failure of their experiments with sexual sharing. Another couple left because of the distance from Melbourne and because of their marital difficulties. Of those involved, twelve came in on the purchase.

The site we had chosen was 245 hectares on top of a 700-metre high mountain, 60 kilometres east of Melbourne. It had both bush and farming land, with a 13-room 'lodge', an old timber house, and a barn —all suitable as community facilities. The soil was fertile and water was plentiful. The property had an air of spectacular beauty and expansiveness.

The community was to be formed of six clusters of housing spaced on either side of a community centre. The centrally located lodge was ideally suited as the community and education centre and the old house was preserved for use as an annexe to it. Housing sites were for four to six dwellings and were within ten minutes' walk of the lodge for ease of access and for visual reasons; each site was located in a natural clearing at the edge of the bush. The maximum area of each site, including common buildings and facilities, was set at 2 acres (a little less than half a hectare). The limited area of each site was to promote social contact and community feeling between cluster members, to minimize environmental impact, and reduce the cost of providing services. After the cluster sites were chosen, a list was compiled detailing all the decisions that had to be made before building could commence, such as providing services, the minimum elements of a master plan, and finance. It was hoped that people would gather together as a cluster group and select their site.

Clusters were to live within the bounds of the co-operative. The co-operative decided the number of clusters, their location and number of dwellings, and approved cluster plans outlining the form of development. These decisions were made to protect later members, and to ensure that clusters would not develop contrary to the co-operative's aims. It was decided to preserve co-operative control of cluster development until a site was constituted with three or more families

(including single-parent families), or five or more adults had taken out two building permits on any cluster site. However, had this number of people chosen a site without having obtained building permits, then they had control over membership of the cluster but not of its plan of development.

Soon after members had attached themselves to cluster sites, the development of their relationships became evident and cluster groupings began to take on significance in co-operative life. People choosing sites met together, explored their relationships, and discussed their cluster and individual building plans. They began to act as a group within the co-operative. This cluster grouping was basic to the design of the community. Life within each cluster was to be the prime concern of those involved. This allowed for a diversity of personalities, a diversity of forms, and for change. No specific family unit was encouraged: communal living was accepted along with nuclear units. With the cluster idea, the co-operative would be not one community but several, each with its own space and activities. Each could fulfil different needs for its members, but be interrelated to help provide common needs. Relationships between clusters could develop from participation in a learning centre, and the sharing of recreational facilities, arts and crafts, farming and the natural environment.

The revised edition of the manifesto was written at the time of our land purchase in April 1974. It emphasized the opportunities for members to choose a radical break, while providing for those who did not want such a change. As Moora Moora required a large number to get off the ground, the aim was to appeal to a wide range of people. The kibbutz model was rejected for Moora Moora because it would be too communal to attract people in Australia—it was not marketable. The co-operative could not afford to be as selective in its appeal as the small-scale counter-cultural communities, which needed only a few people.

As with other bourgeois alternatives, Moora Moora's manifesto spelt out its ideology. It began with a tirade against predominant lifestyles in the city, articulating the alternative seeker's perception of mainstream society:

> We are a group of people concerned to develop an alternative to suburban nuclear living with its particular pressures and limitations. Many of us are discontented with the noise, foul air, water and food of the city, without polluted environment. We are concerned to get away from the overcrowding of city life, its treeless concrete face, its lack of natural surroundings and animal and bird life. Others are particularly concerned about the isolation and loneliness of suburban living, its increasingly high

> cost, the narrowness of the isolated nuclear family, the lack of community facilities and cooperative living. We regret the superficiality of our human relationships within the suburban street, living near neighbours we didn't choose, the isolation of the non-working wife, and the lack of continuous playmates for the children. Others, primarily concerned with education, are dissatisfied with the alienation between learning and living as well as with the forms and content of education. They see our intended community as an educational community: a community that finds life and riches in the pursuit of individual and community development.
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> In a more general sense, many of us are discontented with the mainstream of our society, the direction in which we are going. We dislike the over-centralized nature of our society, our non-participation in the decisions that most personally affect us. We resent being manipulated to 'keep up with the Joneses' and the competitive, violent and materialistic values that permeate the wider society.[2]

The manifesto then went on to the three dominant aims of the co-operative: educational, social and ecological. It stated that learning was an integral part of everyday living. Members believed that education was learning how to live and that it was a continuous process. They wanted to create a 'learning environment [that] enables each person to take responsibility for his own learning whilst providing him with every opportunity to develop his potential as a human being.' Members therefore wanted a community education environment, where people of all ages involved themselves in the learning process, and where they could reflect on the issues of living as they were confronted with them in everyday life. They also wished to maintain access to the sources of wisdom in the wider world. 'We believe that the stimulus and challenge of diversity (inside and outside the community) will enhance the educational value of the cooperative community.'

Moora Moora's plan was to minimize its environmental impact.

> We want to demonstrate how man can work with nature as well as live with it. The key to success in conservation is not in our ability to create isolated sanctuaries separated from the general environmental destruction but rather in our ability to care for nature and yet still in a life-supporting way gather food and enjoyment from it.

Buildings, gardens and tracks were thoughtfully located. The community's long-term impact was to be minimized through its lifestyle. Waste would not be 'discharged', but fully treated and utilized if possible. The shape, material, and location of buildings were designed to fit into the natural environment. It was also the co-operative's intention to use solar energy, wind power, and other alternative technology. Native flora and fauna were to be encouraged

by excluding dogs and cats, controlling exotic flora, and replanting. The existing cattle, sheep and horses, as with all domestic animals in future, were to be kept separate from the bush.

Concerning the social aims of Moora Moora, the manifesto said, 'The total community cooperative is defined both in terms of relationships between clusters and in its involvement with the wider society.' The co-operative planned to relate to the outside community through interest in local council affairs, the provision of common services and through sharing of resources. Most members hoped that Moora Moora would act as one kind of alternative model that was in touch with the orthodox society. As one member envisaged, 'a model that illustrates how we can develop individually as persons, collectively as social beings, comparatively with nature and creatively with our material and our technological creations. A mode that challenges both the individual member and the society.'

In the beginning, the only organized feature of Moora Moora was the planning group. Then a little later, as the search for land intensified, a land committee and rules committee for the registration of the co-operative were formed. Once it was registered, decisions were officially made by an annually elected board of seven directors, and there was also a treasurer and secretary. In practice, the directors' power was restricted to conducting the day-to-day business at fortnightly business meetings. Major decisions were made at policy meetings by all members and invited observers. In the first year, directors were those who were most active in the co-operative; in the second year they were nominal figures; in the third year, due to difficulties of dealing with outgoing members and the need for more cohesion, directors were elected from amongst those most committed and able to serve the co-operative. Later, a compromise was reached where directors controlled the day-to-day decision-making, and meetings were held once a month where all members could participate. 'Policy' meetings became 'community meetings', where issues were aired and the community's feelings were tested but decisions were not necessarily reached.

Each meeting had a chairman, rotated usually amongst those with some ability to keep the meeting to an issue while encouraging wide participation. Minutes were taken and sent out with an agenda for the next meeting. A consensus was reached on all major issues, with the chairman's task being to state the feeling of the meeting. It was the policy that the first part of each meeting was open to members to share feelings and concerns about themselves, others, or towards the co-operative in general. Then the formal meeting started. Part of the

ideology was to be as concerned with person as with task. Therefore, if there was 'a scene going on', the meeting could stop to look at what was happening between the protagonists.

Decisions were made in two ways. In one, a member or committee made a proposal which was discussed, with either a consensus or a predominant viewpoint emerging. The second process of decision-making had to do with basic issues, such as site selection, cluster policy, and voting on membership applications. Here there was a 'go round', where each member in turn was asked his feelings and thoughts. Then came another 'go round' and a vote was taken. This process centred more on the individual and the group, as distinct from the issue and the arguments. This process took longer but had a community-building role. These meetings were sometimes moving and personal, but often pressured, noisy, and tense. Any member had the right to reopen any decision made.

Early meetings were more emotional, with more conflict than later ones, because the risks were higher and the boundaries, framework and mode of operation the community were yet to be defined. Many issues recurred within the co-operative as new members came and old members left. Such issues included the degree of organization within the co-operative, the use of the farm, and relations between the clusters and the co-operative as a whole.

As time went on, special 'task groups' were set up to help resolve conflicts. They were used to confront specific issues where the chief protagonists met to reach a mutually agreeable outcome. Task groups then had their proposal approved by a co-operative meeting. As with all meetings within the co-operative, if the protagonists did not attend, their viewpoint was not considered as seriously.

Several committees were established more permanently to prepare information for discussion by the co-operative. There was an attempt to give people more participation in issues that particularly concerned them. These committees reported to a directors' meeting, where their recommendations were ratified or amended after discussion. The treasurer was part of a finance committee which handled the accounts and made recommendations about the co-operative's financial and legal status. There was also a farm and ecology committee, which defined its role in its first report to the co-operative as to organize the 'day-to-day management of the farm' and to make farming recommendations for decision by the full co-operative. This specifically encompassed animal husbandry, agricultural development and machinery maintenance. The ecology aspect of this committee involved 'education in ecological conservation areas, especially

making material available on desirable and undesirable procedures, chemicals, and conservation of existing land forms, vegetation and wildlife'. This committee like all the other ones had the power to make 'on-the-spot' decisions which would then be subject to ratification by the co-operative. Each committee could spend $10 multiplied by the number of committee members without requiring co-operative approval. Those members who were resident in the co-operative's buildings acted as caretakers, and reported repairs that needed to be done to a works committee which organized the resources to do the work. The works committee was later incorporated as part of the responsibilities of directors.

There were several other committees. An education-activities committee had two sub-committees: one looking at the co-operative as a whole, one focusing on children. One sub-committee made recommendations for a preschool and then for an alternative school. The other sub-committee organized community meetings as consciousness-raising experiences on issues such as sex roles, children, work, consumption patterns, and the nature of community. Eventually this sub-committee became defunct, its functions left to interested people to pursue individually.

The membership committee in its early stages advertised the co-operative and kept records on people interested. Later, in response to increased interest, it worked out procedures for dealing with inquiries, membership applications and meetings to introduce visitors to the nature and ideals of the co-operative. Several people in this committee produced a newsletter for members and others associated with the co-operative. The membership committee was instrumental in introducing a selection procedure to identify people seriously interested; it educated prospective members and brought applicants to the attention of members.

At the beginning the policy for accepting new members had been an 'open door' after the self-selection process had taken its toll. No membership application had been refused, although some had been deferred. As the group grew in size and increasing numbers of applications were received it became more difficult and time-consuming for both members and applicants to get to know each other. There were moves not only to organize the process of being nominated, but also to limit the number that could be voted in at any one time: this was in response to a 1 a.m. meeting when six applications had to be dealt with. The following selection procedure was agreed on. A person seriously interested in pursuing the prospect of membership was invited to become a Friend of Moora Moora with the symbolic loan of

$100 to the co-operative. He could not be voted on for membership unless he had been a Friend for at least four months and had been actively involved in the co-operative. In order to be accepted for nomination, the person was asked to come to a meeting to discuss his nomination, which had to be seconded by at least eight members from four clusters. When a nominating member was voted on, the co-operative could either accept, refuse, or defer the application for up to six months in order to reconsider its view. Moora Moora's policy required a consensus of all members before a new member was accepted, in order to sustain community boundaries.

The criteria to be used in selecting new members were stated in the manifesto:

> The most important qualifications for membership of the community will be the concern of the individual for the aims of the community and his personal compatability with other members. It will be as much up to the individual to determine his/her own compatability as it will be up to the existing members.

However, differing criteria for accepting new members have been suggested and used by existing members. One member looked at the relative constructive and destructive influences of a prospective member on the membership of the co-operative. Another was concerned that: 'Any new applicant needs to be able to demonstrate ability to support himself, to meet his cooperative responsibilities and be seen to contribute something.' Other members felt that if people wished to join, they should be able to. The differing expectations and criteria of selection meant conflict and severe testing of the consensus policy. The first members to join did not face the tests that later members did. Until the community was economically viable, the co-operative could not afford to screen membership stringently, and members' interests varied considerably.

The founding members of Moora Moora were Rodger, George, Dorothy, Ken, Vera, Geoff, Jill, Morry, Magda, Bill, Sandra and I. George and Dorothy, Vera and Ken were close friends, who came in together after hearing my talk to the Humanist Society. They were interested in the community aspect of Moora Moora, more than the rural life. Their own family relationships were troubled and they hoped that in joining the community they would find support and the chance to work themselves out. They were looking for an alternative to the nuclear family. George and Vera were schoolteachers; Dorothy had her own embroidery business; Ken was an audio-visual engineer. They were all in their forties. Dorothy and Vera were involved in

Commune 33, the one which had explored sex equality. Geoff learnt of Moora Moora as a sociology student of mine. He had run his own electrical firm, owned and managed flats, and been mayor of Mordialloc. Aged forty-three, Geoff was married to Jill, a social worker who was eight years younger. They were attracted by the ideals and potential of Moora Moora. Morry, a lawyer aged thirty-five, was a friend of Robert and Ann, and as such had been a frequent visitor to Moorabbee. He had a dual motive for joining: he had separated from his wife and was wanting support while he looked for a new partner; he also had an intellectual fascination with the idea of Moora Moora. The community's difference was a challenge to his inquisitive, intelligent mind. Magda, a language teacher and student at Monash University, was a single mother of two. Aged in her early thirties, she like Morry was looking to Moora Moora more as a community of close friends than for its rural life. Bill was an electronic engineer in his late twenties. He had lived in urban counter-cultural communities and was looking for a rural subsistence lifestyle. Overall, these people were more bourgeois in background and occupation than most other members of alternative communities of the time. They were older and more affluent.

By 6 July 1974, there were fifteen members and nineteen Friends of Moora Moora. By 16 September of that year there were seventeen members and twenty-three Friends. Four who had previously been Friends became members. The arrival of new people was somewhat governed by the co-operative's advertising but also by its prospects. Few people were interested while the planning permit was in doubt, but once it was received, membership interest began to rise. Members were then confronted with the next test of commitment—whether or not they were going to build and live there.

Ian and Lisa were among the first to join the registered co-op and were the first to move up to the land. Ian was an engineer, who was training to be a teacher. Lisa was an artist. Both in their early twenties, they came to know Moora Moora through the Earth Food Co-operative and the Cotham Road Commune. Michael and Joan were another couple in their early twenties to join at this time, having lived previously in the Moorabbee Commune. Ian and Lisa were counter-cultural types who teamed up with Bill and his wife, Marg, who had since joined the co-operative. These four formed a counter-cultural sub-group in the community. Michael and Joan were on the periphery of the group, although they were more monogamous, tight-lipped and conservative. This group sought the simple rural life. They had lived in urban collectives, and now wanted more permanency to

bring up their children. Their ideology was to 'let it happen', advocating openness and minimum organization within the co-operative.

Michael, a heart surgeon, and Jan, a nurse, were another couple who joined early on, with an interest in the social aspects of the community. When Dorothy and Vera were setting up Commune 33 in the inner Melbourne suburb of Kew, Michael and Jan attended. The commune met their need for community, and, like Dorothy's and Vera's, their interest in Moora Moora declined. This decline of interest coincided with the culmination of conflict between the counter-cultural sub-group and the other members of the co-operative. In one meeting, seven members announced their wish to cease their membership. A crisis faced the co-operative. With some members holding back, it was a desperate battle to survive.

The group to leave consisted of the five remaining members of the counter-cultural sub-group (Lisa had left the co-operative previously after she had separated from Ian), of Ken who had never become deeply involved in the co-operative, and of Rodger, who had already stayed with the co-operative longer than he intended. Rodger had not intended to live there. His wife was not sufficiently interested, and although he supported the concept in principle, he did not believe it was a viable proposition. Magda tagged onto this group and also decided to leave. The counter-cultural members spoke for those leaving. They challenged the viability of the venture and were prepared to vote to prevent two nominees for membership from joining. Half a dozen of the most dedicated members met as a 'core group' to try to solve the problems of the co-operative's survival. The crisis was solved with a number of remaining members agreeing to sign legal promissory notes to buy the shares of the departing members within twelve months.

The struggle between these two groups was in part a personality struggle between myself and Bill, which also reflected basic ideological differences. He wanted to offer counter-cultural direction for the co-op. Not being able to do this, and because of the cold climate, he left to go north to create his own small-scale counter-cultural community. It was through his willingness to retire from a meeting to work out a compromise with me, that the co-op was able to survive while allowing his group to leave.

This crisis illustrates a continual major difficulty within the co-operative: the tendency to divide between the philosophy of the bourgeois and that of the counter-culture. This had been expressed in several issues. In approaching the council, for example, bourgeois

members accepted the need of playing along with the system in order to get a permit. The counter-cultural elements of the group would rather have acted as though the council did not exist or at least not have played politics. On the issue of the co-operative's policy towards visitors, burgeois members wanted restrictions and definite policies; the counter-cultural members wanted an open door. The latter also wanted membership to be available to anyone who wanted it, rather than selecting members from a pool. This dichotomy was also expressed in the relative freedom of order they wished to have in their child's education. More basically, it was found in the relative commitment to a survival culture. Bourgeois members wanted to maintain most of their creature comforts, even if rationalized and shared. They tended to rely on experts, did only part of their own building, still wanted to work at least part-time in the city, and aimed to produce only some of their food. The counter-cultural members were more committed to self-sufficiency, and doing things themselves. Within the co-operative, conflict also existed over futuristic alternatives. Counter-cultural members tended to see alternatives simply as 'back to the simple life'. These differences were destructive to the co-operative, as stereotyping hardened the position of each faction and made it more difficult for either party to change.

The crisis resulted in the introduction of a 'queue' as a procedure to help regulate members leaving. The first members to make use of this were Geoff and Jill. They were finding the demands of community life an overwhelming burden. Geoff felt his marriage was threatened. He was in love with the land, but he was not sure he could share it. He decided to go north to find another mountain top for himself, Jill and their four children. Unlike 'the group of seven', they caused a minimum of disruption. They were sympathetic to the co-operative, had been persuasive in it and could afford to continue paying calls on their shares until they were sold. It was previously through Geoff's support with a second mortgage of $55 000 that the co-operative had been able to secure the land.

After this 'low', there was a rush of new interested people and of applications for membership. At one meeting, five people nominated for membership. Membership at this time, in late August 1975, was twenty-four, with thirty-two Friends.

The storm had blown over, giving a second group of members a chance to announce their wish to leave. The four people in this group left mainly because of the state of their relationships and their lack of commitment to the land. This was a more bourgeois group, which included Dorothy, Michael and Vera. Michael claimed he left partly

because the place was financially insecure and partly because of his conflict with me. Jan announced her wish to cease membership a year later. Similarly Vera and Ken, having separated, left Moora Moora and went their own ways. Dorothy and George also separated but were ambivalent about their membership. Dorothy initially wanted to leave, as part of this group, but as Commune 33 declined she changed her mind. Having tried an urban commune, she said she would never live in a nuclear family again, but was not sure about rural life. George said he wanted to remain a member, but he was having trouble finding the time or the money to take an active part.

In June 1977, Moora Moora had thirty-five members, seven of whom had registered their desire to leave the co-operative, and fifty-seven Friends. As well four others had nominated for membership, to be voted on at imminent meetings. By 1978 the co-operative had seen fifty-four people as members. There were forty-three current members, of which nine had indicated their desire to leave and two people were nominated as Friends. At least thirty members were needed to remain viable. Throughout Moora Moora's history, the membership had been overwhelmingly professional, with a significant number of teachers—primary, secondary and tertiary. There were engineers, a lawyer and a doctor. Amongst new applicants and Friends, wider occupational skills were evident, from farmers to builders' labourers. Ages ranged from twenty-three to fifty, with an average age in the late thirties.

Power within the group rested as much with individuals as it did with committees. In the beginning, as the founder of the co-operative, I was quite clearly the dominant influence. Three years later, power rested with a small group within the co-operative, largely those men who had been most involved, committed, and also most outspoken. It was a male-dominated co-operative in influence as well as numbers. Of the twenty-four members in October 1975, fourteen were men. Only a few members formed the committees, although they were open for anyone. In October 1975, fourteen members were involved in committees, and of these all but four were involved in more than one. Of the fourteen, eight were men. A year later, more women took part. In 1979 five of the seven directors were women, as was the treasurer and secretary. Equality of opportunity existed for members who wished to be actively involved, but power in the co-operative was largely a function of length of membership, concern for the co-operative's general welfare, and qualities such as the ability to express ideas clearly.

Originally, co-operative activities centred around meetings in the

city during the week and gatherings on the land at weekends. Gradually activity began to shift to the land. More members became residents and more meetings were held on the land. By summer 1976–7 we could declare, 'Moora Moora is on the land', with fourteen adults and ten children living there. By the next summer in addition six more members were living nearby. The formal meetings were now only an aspect of community life, not the main activity. Work parties were organized, for building a fence for the garden, working on the shed or old house, and gathering hay. At night members sat around the fire talking about cluster and house plans, playing cards and drinking coffee, while children and adults played on the soccer game table. A meditation and yoga group was formed to provide time together in collective silence, for members to turn into themselves, slowing down bodily and mental activities. It was a social support group for members, meeting once a week.

The early strength of the co-operative centred on the clarity of intention and form, with weaknesses of a transient membership. As Moora Moora developed its form evolved. With time, it was accepted, taken for granted and in some instances became custom and tradition. Community feeling strengthened, membership stabilized. The process of emotionally and physically building a home within Moora Moora had taken the centre stage. Each developing cluster had its founding members who were committed to living at Moora Moora, having found their home. *Earth Garden* followed this development.

In *Earth Garden*, No. 24 (September-November 1978), the current activities were described. The development of the housing sites as social groups was significant.

> Of the six clusters planned, five had members. In a clearing on top of the mountain is our northern cluster, Mudburra, which looks across the mountain range to the east. It has four adult members with two children and, of all the clusters, is envisaged to entail most communal sharing. This cluster completed Moora Moora's first building, a rammed-earth goat barn and has provided a useful source of knowledge and experience for other buildings.[3]

The two members who built the barn, Phillip and Pam, went on to build their own house of rammed earth. Phillip, twenty-eight, was a fitter and turner until he joined Moora Moora. He discovered Moora Moora through relations who were avid *Earth Garden* readers. When he arrived here: 'I was knocked out by the view'. He had short hair and 'with-it' gear. He described his relationship with Pam as having orthodox sex roles at that time. Between his first visit and joining, he

broke with Pam, travelled, and dabbled in urban communal life. After he had joined, Pam and he got back together. He was attracted to Moora Moora by the opportunity to provide for his own survival, and the possibilities of sharing within the co-op. Phillip had hated factory work and wanted to gain meaning through developing and producing his survival skills. He could see the practical advantages of being with others.

Pam, twenty-four, also had a working-class background. Her mother had been dominant in bringing up the children, while her father was an authority figure. Pam initially joined Moora Moora to be with Phillip. She was frightened by the ideals and by the people of the co-operative: she felt they were not her sort of people. At first she said little; however, when she separated from Phillip, she became more independent and responsible for her own decisions. When they came back together, she felt that for their relationship to survive it had to have a change and a challenge, which Moora Moora provided.

The nearest cluster to Mudburra was Nyora—on the main ridge of the mountain looking across another arm of the mountain, down the Warburton Valley. 'Two houses [at this cluster] will be habitable within the year. One is of local timber, the other of timber and rammed earth with solar heating and windpower.'[4] One house belonged to the Cocks, the other to the co-operative's oldest member, Joan, who was fifty.

Joan was the only child of an elderly conventional, middle-class, professional family. She was brought up in Caulfield and educated at a Church of England girls' school. However, she was never cast into the role of being only a girl—she learned about tools and her parents encouraged independence. She married Wilby at the age of twenty-seven and pursued a fairly conventional middle-class life in suburban Box Hill. She had three children—two from Wilby's first marriage and David from their own.

> As a family we weren't possession-centred but doing-centred. We both worked. Wilby retrained from a draughtsman to a lecturer and I lectured, when the children were older, at the Institute of Early Childhood Development. Inside our house provided the resources for music, photography, table tennis and room to play with the children.
>
> We heard of Moora Moora through Bob, who later became a member. He was then lecturing with Wilby at R.M.I.T. We had been looking for land as a country property for retirement. We had begun to realize that this wasn't all we wanted and saw ourselves becoming isolated. The traditional retirement did not appeal to us. Moora Moora was a group of people interested in sharing, and a place where we could feel useful and needed. It was a broadening and challenging idea. When we met the co-op in early 1975, meetings were in the city—the land was secondary. We liked the people, who were friendly and outgoing, and although the odds against the co-op were high we were prepared to take the risk. We seemed conservative to other members and we were concerned about whether we would be accepted. At first we found it difficult to cope with meetings and the apparent disorganization of affairs, especially finances, even though there was planning for the future.

As they became more involved in Moora Moora, their ties with old friends and their own interests became less important. Joan said her feelings about the co-operative fluctuated 'from a sense of belonging, support and of achieving something to being despondent—with too much still to be done'. She saw herself as an active member, who was very concerned with the co-op's survival. Joan felt that Moora Moora's future was secured financially. It was established in its thinking, in its policies and running mechanisms. There was no longer a threat of division—argument had become healthy and not so divisive—'we have mellowed a lot more, jogging along'. She believed that a special difficulty at this stage was that most of the deeply involved members were building their houses, and were not able to contribute to the whole community. When a number of houses were completed and clusters were more developed, she believed there would be more time to work on the community as a whole. Joan used her influence as treasurer to make members realize that the co-operative had to have a sound financial structure and be within the bounds of what the outside world required. She felt that the counter-cultural members required too much change—too radical a leap. Being treasurer provided Joan with a niche. She enjoyed the role but was looking for a new one, maybe as a director, as correspondence secretary or through the cluster. She liked her cluster for its philosophy of limited sharing, such as pooling of resources in a cluster centre, and sharing a garden and orchard. She felt that people at Nyora were prepared to use their financial resources to achieve something new and different, for example with solar heating.

Wilby's death in September 1978 threw Joan's world into confusion. Previously her future in the co-operative had been clear; now she found herself without definite expectations. The support Moora Moora offered at this time was significant. She felt closer to the community, accepted and trusted.

Bob, the person who had introduced Joan to Moora Moora, was involved in the cluster after Nyora. 'In a small saddle of the ridge, close to the co-operative's centre, nestles the third site. With four members

and four children, this cluster plans to commence its first building, the cluster centre, this year.'[5] This cluster was started by Bob and Jolanda, who had been married for eleven years and had three children. Jolanda, thirty-two, was born in Holland, the fifth of ten daughters. She was a mothering figure in the co-op, always trying to be helpful.

A man with wry humour, Bob, thirty-six, was born in Hungary to 'well-to-do but honest Jewish parents'. For adventure, he left with an uncle when fourteen years old to live in a migrant hostel in Sydney for five years while at school.

> I was poor and had to work my way through university with the aid of a Commonwealth fellowship. But this didn't effect the way I saw myself. I was idealistic and wanted to do something useful for humanity. In the '50s, science and technology was the way, but at university, I saw its abuse so shifted to working to understand people, and so did psychology. An avid reader, the more I studied the more dissatisfied I became with the state of the world and my role in it. In 1972 at that deadly period of writing my Ph.D. I felt it was impossible for the individual or group to do anything about the world—the time lag problem meant that even if all agreed and started changing their lifestyle it would probably be too late and disaster would come.

However, he decided suicide was not necessary, even though some projections for the future consisted of total destruction. There were various other possible futures in which human survival was likely but only in a state of barbarity. So he felt it was worthwhile devoting himself to the cause of trying to salvage what was good in civilization. He wanted to create a lifeboat survival community. Not having access to the resources, he came to Moora Moora which he had heard of through Bill Robinson (of Bill's Bookshop). His attitude mellowed and he later felt it was his

> duty to do everything in my power to change the world, even if doomed: to live life now like I would like to see it universally practised in the future. The advantage of Moora Moora is as a transition community in a position to gather together people and develop the necessary survival skills.

Bob and Jolanda joined Moora Moora in January 1976 after being involved for a year. Bob saw himself as having changed through being a Moora Moora member: 'I have become less sure of myself, more open to opinions and feelings of others, more tolerant, and have learnt practical skills.' He felt the community was much improved on its early days. People who left were preoccupied with issues that were symptomatic of present day society's degeneration. For example, he was not against group marriage, but thought that it worked best only

with a deep involvement and the intimate relationships of an extended family. He saw his cluster as his extended family. Madelon was like a grandmother to the kids; Trish was an older sister to Jolanda. They trusted each other. 'If there was a fire, I would save them as my family. We work together—are building together—a cluster centre and a garden, and so building an extended family.' He believed new members were more into survival and yet still held a range of views. The co-op had 'got away from yap-yap to work-work'.

> We have grown closer together. We are building up a community and it will survive. However, it is too bureaucratic, and has to evolve traditions that replace the need for quoting the rule book. This reflects the background of the members in society and the immaturity of the community. We are still too dependent on money, need more members, and it is becoming harder for new people to fit in as more and more of the co-op is defined. We are so into our own work that communal work tends not to be done. However, we are over the worst humps and one part of a grassroot silent revolution: the world's only hope.

The fourth cluster, named Yanginanook (meaning: we all together) is on the other side of the lodge from the third site. It has a view over the Yarra Valley and towards Melbourne. 'Their almost complete, first [building] is a rammed earth arts and crafts workshop. In the centre of the cluster is a vegetable garden and on the periphery of their clearing are an orchard and house sites. Two sets of house plans are currently being drawn up.'[6] These are now under construction.

Lesley, a primary-school teacher aged twenty-five, and her husband Mark, thirty, were building one of the houses. Lesley was of a middle-class family in an outer suburban area in England. Her parents were authoritarian, but caring. She came to Australia with her family when she was sixteen. She had lived with Mark for several years but they had only recently been married, primarily for the sake of the children they planned. They felt that urban communes were too transitory and that not much could be accomplished in one house. Mark had been a member of The Commune in North Melbourne: 'There were too many hassles because of the different views of cleanliness in the kitchen and bathroom. It was no place for a family'. Their attraction to Moora Moora was initially that community living was cheaper, and later it developed to include other benefits of living closely with people. Lesley was attracted by the beauty of the land and she liked the cluster concept, which allowed for diversity of people in the community. 'I felt it was a goer, a more sensible and down to earth' alternative than many. Lesley saw her cluster as aiming at being a group of people who

lived fairly harmoniously together, who shared common values and had similar lifestyles. She saw the cluster as middle-of-the-road, a balanced agent between 'the rule-makers of Nyora' and the 'non-rule-makers of Mudburra'.

Lesley and Mark had joined the co-op after looking for land in Tasmania. Land there was either too expensive, too cold or too far from work for commuting. Although Lesley would have preferred to go further from Melbourne, she had known about Moora Moora for some time through *Earth Garden* and Dave Miller of *Grass Roots* magazine. Mark and Lesley initially visited the co-operative with another member of The Commune, who is now also a member of Yanginanook.

Two of Lesley's aims in joining an alternative community were to become more self-sufficient and live at a slower pace. She hoped that she would not have to work outside the property. However, to make the transition to living on the land she had to speed her life up temporarily to reach a slower lifestyle. She felt that Moora Moora required a lot of energy, just to establish its buildings. She believed her personality had not changed, but needed time to warm up and trust others and as time progressed, she felt more relaxed and at ease in the co-op. She believed that personality hassles had become less frequent in the time since she had joined. The co-operative had become more practical and had developed an underlying feeling of caring. However, she believed that the community faced problems with attracting new members because of the increasing cost of membership and the difficulty of them finding a place in the established clusters. She felt Moora Moora was 'very much home' and saw joining as a 'lifetime commitment'.

The fifth cluster area, a bush site down the road from Yanginanook, was undeveloped for later members. Further down the road was the sixth cluster, in a dip along the mountain ridge: a large park-like clearing with space allocated for its vegetable garden. 'With a European village-type influence, its houses will cluster around a linden tree. Its shared facilities will be dispersed around its houses. The first house is designed with a high-pitched gable roof, hand-adzed timbers from the surrounding bush and infills made of hand-made bricks.'[7]

The builder, Hans, thirty-eight, was the third son in a family of four boys. His parents were teachers in a small Austrian village in the foothills of the Alps. His father had been the significant cultural leader in the village before he died in a Russian prisoner-of-war camp. With his mother, Hans left the village home at fifteen for a cramped flat and took a job as metallurgical laboratory assistant. He felt cramped in the city and disliked his work; at eighteen he was threatened by the army

call-up. So he left Austria to roam around Europe. His dream was to build a boat as a floating caravan and to explore the world as a sea gypsy. He came to Australia and after a while acquired a boat. His wife Annette 'slotted in to his big dream' but then they lost their second son, Raoul, in a boating accident and they were in limbo for two or three years and roamed again. Hans had never felt part of society but only gradually became aware that he was seeking an alternative to the status quo. Through folksinging and friends he came in contact with Eltham and Montsalvat. He visited Austria for seven months, working as, amongst other things, a carpenter; he was reminded of the advantages of village life—its community feeling and simplicity. He became homesick for Australia and realized that Australia was home. Back in South Yarra for two years he began to build close networks between friends. But he wanted to belong to a community—first on a boat, now on land. With a group of nine friends he talked about rural life. They looked for land in Victoria but could not agree on a site, and there were ideological differences—some wanted to be close, others wanted physical distance. 'Although I was the coordinator, I didn't have the practical push.' Hans heard about Moora Moora from friends and thought that although not as good as starting on his own, it was better than nothing. His first impression of Moora Moora, from local gossip, was '. . a bunch of unrealistic academics—beautiful land but you should see their gardens.' However he felt that it was better to help something to become practical and let go of the ego trip of setting up a community.

Setting up cluster six proved harder than he imagined and notions of leadership lost their glamour. Some of the people who had been looking for land with him took an interest in Moora Moora and cluster six. However, for a while Annette and Hans were the only active people in the cluster. Hans visualized a hamlet with an enclosed central common, but the cluster was not clearly defined—'a place where people could co-exist and grow with enough emotional support to feel that they belonged to a community'. When Hans first joined in March 1976, Moora Moora was his second priority. It was when Moora Moora was threatened and attacked, and the earlier group from cluster six left, that he began to defend and to identify with Moora Moora. It was the crisis over the co-operative's security and moves to subdivide the land to meet middle-class financial anxieties that Moora Moora became his first priority. 'I now feel at home for the first time . . . At last it is where I belong. I feel secure enough to allow others to make decisions without being threatened and remind others to be themselves. I trust others even if I disagree with their mode of action'. Hans felt that in the time he had been a member friendships

had developed, and personality rather than output had been taken more into account. So there was more room to manoeuvre with wider tolerance of varying differences and commitments. It took quite a while to 'emotionally unpack my bags and say here I am'. Clusters had the same problem that the co-op had before, he said. They were being formed and in the 'getting it together' phase. The centres of conflict had shifted to clusters as they struggled to establish cluster feeling and joint priorities. Hans was a little disappointed that earlier communal attempts at cluster four were a failure, and so far similar attempts at Mudburra were not doing well. He felt that in spite of Moora Moora's stated ideology, the couple was predominant at the cost of other family groupings.

Annette, thirty-four, grew up in a working-class family with seven children. The nearest was five years older than her, so she was a loner in a large family. She was born in Melbourne and brought up in that city, and the Dandenongs. 'I was eighteen when I met Hans. I had the desire to leave home, but had no ambition to reform the world.' After looking at Europe to see if she wanted to settle there, she decided it was unrealistic for her, with its lack of freedom and the difficulty of buying a house or land. On returning to Australia, Annette looked with Hans for land, and eventually came to Moora Moora.

> Hans was not keen on Moora Moora at first. He wanted a smaller, less rigid, more open community, but to create it ourselves would take years, and after I realized how long it took and the personal drive needed I said to Hans: 'I am going to join, and I would really like you to join with me, but it is up to you.'

Out of her confusion Moora Moora offered direction. It was an 'answer to the old system and contributing to a new society, a new future'. She found that she had to change to live in Moora Moora.

> You don't let yourself be used up. You become more realistic and self-aware, because you are committed to living with the people and working things out. If you avoid them and your difficulties, you just put off working out the relationship. So you learn to face up to problems—by seeing others solve theirs.

She saw benefits for her son Phillip, aged fifteen, even though there was no one of his age group there. Moora Moora had matured him through his close contact with adults and little children.

For Annette, the land's beauty has been a source of peace of mind and inner reflection, which was balanced by the stimulus of community living, and the challenge of the severe changing elements of cold, wind, rain and snow. She found daily activities had to be

adapted in response to the weather: she had 'to flow with the seasons. You cannot cut yourself off from nature.'

Another member of this cluster Mark Snell, who edited this book into shape from my Ph.D. thesis. As a 'twice retired' journalist aged twenty-two, he published and edited a newspaper, the *Harrow*, for the Healesville community. Many Moora Moora members contributed to this. Mark first heard of alternative lifestyles through studying sociology at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology as part of a journalism diploma course. Working for the Oakleigh *Standard Times*, he interviewed me about the viability of communes and wrote a half-page report. He came with suit, tie and closely cropped hair, all neat and tidily packaged. 'At that stage, aged eighteen, I was still very much shaped by my parents,' he later explained. His seeds of discontent germinated while he was working for the *Age* in Melbourne. While there, he read an article of mine in *Earth Garden* about Moora Moora and followed it up. He was critical of the importance placed on appearance by editorial executives, the lack of value he found in his job, and his isolation within a large organization.

> The jobs I found appealing were further up the ladder, and to get there I would have had to act in ways that weren't worth it at all. On the other hand, I had found community journalism completely the reverse. For instance at Standard Newspapers, there were anarchists, homosexuals, a variety of radicals, all of whom were free to retain their identities. The feeling within the office was really amazing when I look at it now.

Mark had seen journalism as making an active contribution to the welfare of society. However, in 1975 the *Age*'s sensational handling of the Cairns loans affair (when the Whitlam government attempted to borrow a large sum in petrodollars without Loans Council approval) made him aware that his role as a journalist was not enough for him. He felt unable to exert significant influence either through the polls or through newspapers, and it was as a political act that he looked to alternative communities—the basis of a society which would inherently tend to avoid the shortcomings of modern mass society. He saw Moora Moora as having had a radical effect on him:

> When I joined I was conservative in my approach to life, if not in my attitudes, and was inhibited to a large extent by my fear of the unknown. I was strongly influenced by a Methodist upbringing and my reaction against authoritarian treatment during my life in private boys' schools. Resigning from the *Age* and joining Moora Moora was a big step in overcoming my inhibitions. A year later I took another in giving up the security of a regular job. Other steps have followed and I now feel much

more free to determine my own life, although I am still conservative in being unwilling to take any action with blind faith.

When he first joined, Mark intended building a house and, perhaps unrealistically, establishing a communal family. Almost three years later, and still single, he described Moora Moora as satisfying his emotional needs. He felt a fraternity with both the adults and the children of the community. Moora Moora had been home to him for a comparatively long time: he had shifted house many times as a child and since leaving his parents. Along with other members of the community, Mark welcomed the trend of lessening intensity of conflict within co-op meetings, the increase of activity on the land and the growing friendly spirit within the community.

Overall, Moora Moora members were involved in a diversity of activities, of which the members described were representative. Similarly, these people expressed the range of differences as well as sharing views in common. Although from diverse backgrounds, most had joined Moora Moora to settle down and make their permanent home. Initially, like other visitors, they had come after hearing about the co-operative through personal contact or through the media. However, for all the contacts the co-op made, it was less than one in ten of the visitors who eventually joined.

Interested people often visited after hearing a member speak of Moora Moora. Much of the contact made with the co-operative had come informally through word of mouth, but members were also often invited to speak to groups. The co-operative had considerable contact with national and local media. Two articles appeared in *Earth Garden*, five in *Grass Roots*, and one each in the newsletter of the Australian Institute of Human Relations, *Habitat* and the *Australian Humanist*,[8] as well as advertisements in *Nation Review*, the *Age*, *Yarra Valley News*, teachers' journals, and *Learning Exchange*. Robyn Williams, of the A.B.C.'s New Society, did a programme on Moora Moora as one of six on 'The Alternative Society in Australia'.

The immediate neighbours had also been generally favourable to the co-operative's aims. One couple sent their three children to the co-operative's play-group. Local landowners were generally environmentally concerned. However they were divided in their response to Moora Moora's opposition to a State Electricity Commission power scheme for the mountain. The co-operative's contact with the local township of Healesville has been friendly if functional—to purchase milk or fuel. In spite of his evident uncertainty about the 'rich hippies on the hill', the local policeman joined members in fixing fences cut by 'bikies', and later, through the same man, a horse was donated to the co-operative. The amateur historian happily handed over all the information he had on the history of the mountain.

Official contact with the local community had centred around the co-operative's application for a planning permit from the local council. During these negotiations, several letters were sent to councillors, who were then invited to informal discussions and a tour of the land with selected members. Those councillors who were known to be opposed to the scheme were approached personally. Stress was placed on the advantages of the scheme to Healesville Shire in terms of conservation of the mountain at no expense to the community. It was explained that Moora Moora was not unique, that it was aiming to establish permanent houses, and to be a part of the Healesville community. In particular, thirty dwellings were argued to be necessary to provide resources to manage the co-operative. The letter also stressed that members, while not being a 'bunch of hippies' were also not just a group of academics, and that the co-operative's concepts of education included learning about bushcraft, care of flora and fauna, and agriculture. The letter was well-received, as were the discussions with council members. The engineer's later refusal to issue the permit was overriden by the council. The co-operative was able to maintain council approval to gain the separate building permits needed for each house.

Formal contact was also made with government bodies for grants to assist in the co-operative's development: bodies such as the Regional Social Development Council, the Federal Housing Corporation and the Children's Commission. No government finance was forthcoming, largely because the co-operative did not fit into the usual social grouping in need. The welfare mentality that only gave grants to 'poor people' meant that the co-operative was inevitably deemed too bourgeois or, in the case of the regional council, not a 'grass roots community development project, rather a private venture'. Although the co-operative gained significant support from the community-based membership of this social development council, it was overriden by the Social Security Department and representatives from the local councils. The co-operative also applied to the Victorian Conservation Trust and the Ministries of Conservation and of Planning, to no avail. However moral support and encouragement was given by the Registrar of Co-operatives and the government Ministers. It was only after six months of negotiation that long-term finance for the co-operative's land purchase was made available. In what was believed to be the first government support for alternative communities in Australia since the 1890s, the state Treasurer guaranteed a bank loan of $175 000 to Moora Moora.

There were few communities of the scale and apparent viability of Moora Moora. As a result, numerous small groups visited the co-operative, read about it, and drew in varying ways on its philosophy and structure in establishing their own co-operatives. For example, an older couple visiting from a Perth commune took the Moora Moora manifesto and set up a smaller co-operative, the Wolery, in southern Western Australia.

Internally, Moora Moora was able to agree on its basic aims and organization. The co-operative gradually evolved in numbers and community feeling on the land. Building began. It had not been easy —several times the co-operative came close to folding. The struggle to survive seemed to have passed, although the future form and feeling was unclear. With finance and land secure, Moora Moora's survival depended on the continuing resolution of conflict. In what ways would the community deal with the conflicts between individual personalities and between competing aims and needs? There were trade-offs between commitment to the co-operative and a desire for individual and cluster autonomy; between a survival culture and a leisure culture; and in the dynamic synthesis of the elements of living, learning and surviving ecologically. If Moora Moora was unable to continually work out co-operative ways of confronting its difficulties and tensions, it faced collapse.

Although they did not directly challenge the cultural hegemony of the Corporate State, rural bourgeois communities like Moora Moora were attempting to provide an organized grassroots alternative to developers and public authorities. Individuals grouped together to become involved in important decisions regarding roads, water, energy, ecology and neighbours. Decisions were community-based rather than either purely individual or made by impersonal organizations. These communities were often called 'bourgeois' in a derogatory sense—seen as still being caught up in the Corporate State, as wanting their cake and eating it, as being unwilling to make a radical break. However, the power of these communities was not in their radical steps but in their attempts to come to grips with their survival beyond the present. Communities like Round the Bend, Moora Moora and the Wolery made systematic attempts to organize their affairs to encourage feelings of security and collective strength so that members felt able to invest themselves for their future. This was seen as part of designing an alternative society for the future, which went beyond the transitory counter-cultural lifestyles predicted by Alvin Toffler with 'the death of permanency'.[9]