



Welcome to the April/May edition of the SOC newsletter for 2008/09. In this edition we are continuing our series of articles that seek to explain a bit more about what SOC is on about, with an Opinion piece that John Peet recently submitted to the Press which was rejected on the grounds they already had something similar from overseas. It still makes very good reading.

There are also articles on transition communities, generally, on the progress of a new initiative in Roimata (Woolston) and a call for people interested in this in Riccarton. There is information on a recent submission made by one of our members Tom Taylor, about the City Council's proposal to dump more sewage in our rivers, and on SOC's submission to the City Council's Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP). There is also information on how to either contribute to SOC's submissions on the ECAN the LTCCP, or make your own. The next major event SOC is involved in supporting is a visit by prominent American Climate Change campaigner **Bill McKibben** on **1 May**. There is also a cartoon on the back page. As for previous newsletters, the articles are classified in the following manner

Personal (and domestic)

Local (neighbourhood level)

Town and Around (city and region wide)

National

Global

If money is the problem, why is it also the solution? John Peet

A friend recently commented that what we were facing, in NZ and the world, was not a recession, nor a depression. It was a *consequence*. A consequence of half a century of unbridled economic growth and environmental and resource depletion, together with development of a culture of greed, culminating in unbelievable levels of wealth for some, and dispossession for many.

Most economists, bankers and politicians did not see the current debt crisis coming. Given the claims of economics to be a predictive science, one might ask, why not? And given that it was the bankers who were largely responsible for the crisis, why is it that –in the US and UK in particular – they are being handed astronomical sums of taxpayers' money to restart? Clearly, there is something wrong.

A clue to the problem comes from looking at the scientific fundamentals of economic thought, in particular the origins of that branch known as neoclassical economics (NCE). By the middle of the 19th Century, advances in technology encouraged a confidence that virtually any problem could be solved, courtesy of the power of classical physics (mechanics) acting through engineering. At that time, physics was based on the discoveries of Galileo and Newton on the motions of the sun and planets, which also allowed explanation of the properties of large structures and machines.

The early economists aimed to construct a science of economics that would be just as successful in explaining the activities of people in society. In doing so, they borrowed concepts from classical physics and substituted economic terms for physical ones, thereby creating an analogue of physics. This analogue was susceptible to advanced mathematical analysis, and since then NCE has assembled a formidable library of mathematically-based tools, to explain just about everything thought to be of importance.

Unfortunately, the early economists were not aware that the physics of the day was in fact in a state of ferment. While classical mechanics was and is extremely useful, it fails to explain vitally-important issues relating to the complex place of energy, in topics such as heat, light and

electricity. In the later years of the century, major advances in these and other areas changed physics forever.

Most importantly, by discovering the centrality of the second law of thermodynamics, physicists were able to understand the answers to such questions as why perpetual motion was not possible, why the use of high quality resources such as heat or electrical energy always resulted in much of it going to waste, and why a living organism was not an isolated machine, but a complex open system, reliant upon taking high-quality resources from its surroundings and expelling lower-quality wastes. Instead of an equilibrium state, to which a system would always return after a disturbance (central to classical physics and NCE), reality (including life and economic systems) actually exists in a state far from equilibrium and subject to inherent instability.

Although advised by physicists of their error, proponents of NCE continued to develop their subject using the old mid-19th century starting points, which are central to NCE to this day. That fact explains why most economists (and the politicians and bankers they advise) still believe in a form of perpetual motion, such that the GDP of an economy can continue to grow, forever.

In the NCE model, resource scarcity is always overcome via substitution by new resources, or by improved technology. Modern engineering and physics have shown however, that most major new resources are more difficult to extract than those already used and that improvements in technology are severely constrained by limits set by the second law of thermodynamics.

In the economic mindset, if GDP growth is not happening in practice, then a means must be found to make it happen. That is where debt and money creation come in. Over the last couple of decades, assisted by deregulation of monetary systems, debt-based money supply has grown at a rate vastly faster than the increase in production of actual goods and services. To assist this process, bankers created new monetary instruments enabling debts to be used to create yet more debts, and so on, until the house of cards collapsed. Governments then stepped in.

My point is that the NCE belief in both the desirability and the inevitability of endlessly-continued economic growth has fuelled a monstrous confidence trick on humanity and nature.

Modern science must be allowed to influence economic policy generation in the halls of government, to enable a major change of direction. The changes that will be required promise to be challenging, but it is absolutely necessary, for our health and that of our families, societies and the whole of life on earth, that this happens, and happens soon. Only then will we be able to claim honestly, that we are serious about trying to address issues of unsustainable economic activity, in NZ and in the world.

Visit by prominent Global Warming Campaigner Bill McKibben

Bill McKibben will be visiting Christchurch on May 1 and speaking at Christchurch Community House (141 Hereford St) from 9:00-10:00 with a more in depth discussion time scheduled from 10:00 -11:00

He is an American environmentalist and writer who frequently writes about global warming, alternative energy, and the risks associated with human genetic engineering. Beginning in the summer of 2006, he led the organization of the largest demonstrations against global



Sustainable Otautahi Christchurch Incorporated
 PO Box 2216, Christchurch 8140
www.sustainablechristchurch.org.nz
 Secretary Dave Evans dave.evans@alliedtelesyn.co.nz

warming in American history. McKibben is active in the Methodist Church, and his writing sometimes has a spiritual bent.

McKibben has published a number of books including *Deep Economy: the Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*. It addresses what the author sees as shortcomings of the growth economy and envisions a transition to more local-scale enterprise.

In late summer 2006, Bill helped lead a five-day walk across Vermont to demand action on global warming that some newspaper accounts called the largest demonstration to date in America about climate change. Beginning in January 2007 he founded stepitup07.org to demand that Congress enact curbs on carbon emissions that would cut global warming pollution 80 percent by 2050. With six college students, he organized 1,400 global warming demonstrations across all 50 states of America on April 14, 2007. Step It Up 2007 has been described as the largest day of protest about climate change in the nation's history. A guide to help people initiate environmental activism in their community coming out of the Step It Up 2007 experience entitled *Fight Global Warming Now* was published in October 2007 and a second day of action on climate change was held the following November 3. For more information see www.billmckibben.com

SOC Submission on ECANs Long Term Council Community Plan.

Environment Canterbury's Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) provides an opportunity for Cantabrians to have their say on priorities for the environment for the next 10 years. Water management is one of the key issues within Canterbury along with rapid land use changes, public passenger transport, air quality and managing urban growth. A full version of the LTCCP along with submission forms will be available on www.ecan.govt.nz. A summary has been delivered to households in the April edition of ECan's 'Living Here'.

There are a number of issues in this document that deserve attention. First is the rate increase proposed of 3.9% which consists of a 1.7% inflation adjustment and a 2.2% increase on top of this.

There is also a new Universal Annual General Charge to fund councillor representation and provision of public information (p.6 column 1 of the Living Here document). This charge is fixed per household and not proportional to capital value, hence harder on poor. While this could be seen to be acceptable given that it is focused on democracy issues there is the issue that while this is small and specifically focused now, will its introduction lead to larger charges of this type in the future?

Another issue is Water management, and what is proposed is that \$2.2m additional costs are to come from irrigation consent holders instead of coming from general rates. (p.6 column 2)

Also while there is a paragraph on climate change in the introduction and several mentions of the threats it poses, there are no mitigation measures proposed and little talk of adaptation. One mechanism for climate change adaptation could be for the water management strategy to look at alternative land uses.

Transport - in January the Regional Transport Committee proposed to spend only \$5m from regional National Land Transport funds on walking, cycling and public transport. Under a formula decided in 2005 this was expected to be \$43m, but under the proposal \$38m will be diverted to roading. (see following article for more information on this).

Submissions to ECan's LTCCP and the Canterbury Regional Land Transport Programme are due at 4pm on **April 28** 2009. If you would like to contribute to SOC's submissions please contact Dave Evans at dave.evans@alliedtelesyn.co.nz

Christchurch motorways 'significant'/ ECANs draft Regional Land Transport Programme 2009-19

Christchurch's motorway projects have been included in the Government's "roads of national significance" funding package which replaces the proposed regional fuel tax. Canterbury Regional Transport Committee chair Cr Jo Kane wants to ensure that Canterbury's transport "needs" are taken into account. "We must not lose sight of the need to treat the transport system as an integrated whole, and that includes looking after local infrastructure so that people and freight can move efficiently, safely and sustainably throughout the whole transport network." Canterbury's draft Regional Land Transport Programme 2009-19 will close for submissions on 28 April 2009, 4 pm. Recent Green party calculations however indicate that one dollar is spent on public transport for every five dollars on roads. Under National, this ratio is likely to widen to \$1:\$7. If you would like to comment on Cr. Kane's (lack of) vision for the areas transport future information copies of this document and a summary document are available on the ECan website www.ecan.govt.nz/rltp. Hard copies are available at district and city council service centres and libraries.

Source ECAN

Campaigners push for plastic bag levy

A nationwide campaign to push for a levy on plastic supermarket bags was launched on 3 April. The Get Real campaign wants Progressive Enterprises and Foodstuffs, owners of New Zealand's largest supermarkets, to charge for plastic bags at their supermarket counters. Both companies signed the Packaging Accord in 2004 which set a goal of reducing the number of bags used by a fifth (144 million bags) this year. Sustainable Wanaka general manager Sophie Ward, whose organisation was involved in the campaign, said supermarkets needed to make a real commitment to reducing the number of plastic bags given away each year.

Nearly a billion plastic bags were buried in landfills each year, with others polluting outdoor spaces and being ingested by wildlife, she said. Campaigner Angus Ho said experience here and overseas showed having to pay for plastic bags changed people's behaviour. Plastic bags never completely broke down, Mr Ho said. "They disintegrate into smaller and smaller pieces, taking over 500 years and ending up as plastic dust in the air and soil." In a letter to Mr Ho, Environment Minister Nick Smith said the ministry was investigating the effectiveness and feasibility of a levy on plastic bags.

The organisers praised The Warehouse, which is to introduce a 10c levy on plastic bags from April 20. A survey of 600 Warehouse customers showed 78 per cent supported the change, with 85 per cent of those affected by trials at stores saying they would choose not to use a plastic bag once the charge applied. The cash collected from the levy will go to community groups and bags can be returned to Warehouse stores for recycling. The Warehouse, along with Mitre 10 and Caltex, also signed the Packaging Accord. By January this year, 100 million bags had been taken out of circulation as the campaign gained traction. Bunnings and Borders had their own bag reduction schemes, with Borders reducing usage by 80 per cent in one year with a 10c levy.

The New Zealand Retailers Association opposed a ban or mandatory tax on plastic bags and rejected calls for New Zealand to follow the South Australian Government, which introduced a Plastic Shopping Bags (Waste Avoidance) Act on January 1. The association previously said the industry was on track to reach targets voluntarily, so a ban or tax was not required.

Ireland and Taiwan both reduced plastic bag use by more than 90 per cent through a small levy, Get Real organisers said. India introduced a 100,000 rupee (\$3800) fine and possible jail time for

selling or even carrying a non-biodegradable plastic bag. An open letter to the supermarkets can be signed at www.getreal.org.nz.

Source - NZPA

Locally on **Monday April 20th** an action is planned at Countdown on Moorehouse Avenue. Volunteers are requested to meet in the Car Park at 10:30. Volunteers will hold a big banner in front of the supermarket and wait for the manager to receive the letter with the list of signatures. Expected finished time 11:15. To volunteer or for more information contact angusho@greeners-action.org

**"If we do not change our direction,
we are likely to end up where we are headed."
- Chinese Proverb**

Community Resilience –a new virus! Christoph Hensch

There is a contagion spreading across the country. However it is not the new influenza strain, or a viral attack but a new form of community development called “community resilience” Originally started because of concern about the twin impacts of climate change and potential scarcity, it has grown to address wider questions of community development in times of economic downturn, social cohesion and the impacts of urban design on neighbourhood amenity.

Communities that are resilient are able to cope with the impacts of rapid physical and social change through a combination of

- Network building
- Visioning
- Project development
- Individual and household empowerment

One of the advantages of community resilience networks is that they can draw on a large variety of resources , formal through the local government sector and informal through social networks of volunteers and technical help.

Network Building One of the strengths of community resilience initiatives is their ability to draw in others. This is done in variety of ways, such as web-based pages, viral emails, community workshops ,public meetings, and displays at other related gatherings. People within a community become interested in a topic, say warm homes and insulation, and they are then drawn into thinking about the role that energy plays in our lives and how energy conservation can reduce the demands for further large-scale energy projects. They may go onto being interested in waste generated in the home or business and ways in which it can be used or refused. Most topics now have a web-based resource such as Sustainable Households that can be accessed

Visioning When a neighbourhood or community decides it has reached a critical mass of those who are both interested and available to meet together to work on initiatives, it is often a good idea to develop a shared vision. A “Visioning” workshop typically asks about what people see their community or neighbourhood looking like in 20-30 years time. From that picture of the future, a timeline is developed and certain critical actions are sketched in using “backcasting” (instead of Forecasting) techniques. Tasks groups can then be organized to work on individual initiatives that lead towards the developed community vision statement.

Project development Because not everyone can work on everything and time and personal energy fluctuate, various projects are usually set up and proceed at their own pace. Some likely topics such as transport, or food may start with an inventory of what is currently available. The networks that can help with aspects of project development and implementation are then accessed. A project together with both short term seeding funding requirements and requirements for long term operational funding, and the committed people who will see it through to completion, is initiated. The project is reported on regularly to the community and feedback sought on how it meets the needs of the wider community. By a process of ongoing monitoring and reporting the project then remains current and responsive to the needs of all.

Personal and household empowerment The participation in the process of developing community resilience initiatives leads onto using both old skills and learning new ones for many. In this way it is empowering as people can be involved from the earliest steps of a process and see it through to completion, and become in turn community “experts” who can help empower others. For households, it gives a sense of being connected in a very vital way with others who are not only concerned with community direction but willing to roll their sleeves up and do it. If the project is concerned with an initiative such as learning to grow organic food it contributes in a real way to the household economy. The sharing of items such as tools or books and materials also builds on the household and neighbourhood stock of resources. People now have both the links to assist them and the support they need to reach their individual and household goals.

Conclusion Community resilience is primarily a participatory and interactive process to address issues of concern to the community. It can be done in a variety of ways depending what resources and people are available to that community. The process functions as both an personal educative tool and a call for action to meet the coming environmental, social economic and institutional challenges. And it works because it is a bottom up or “flax roots” approach, not tied to corporate agendas.

Enthusiastic souls needed for transition initiative in Riccarton

Mik Dale new SOC member writes ‘. I am a postgraduate student at the University of Canterbury studying Energy Supply Systems and have a keen interest in sustainability and Transition issues. I have recently moved to Riccarton and I am keen to meet like-minded people willing to dedicate some time and effort to setting up a Transition Initiative in the local area, or maybe just those willing to lend some moral support or much-needed advice. If you are interested I would love to hear from you. Please contact me by email at mikdale@gmail.com.’

SOC Submission on Christchurch City Council's Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP).

We [have](#) just completed our submission on this document . The following is a summary of the points made

- That as no reference could be found in the LTCCP to Community Outcome Process (COPs) or the imperative in the Local Government Act (LGA) 2002 for Councils to **“take a sustainable development approach” that clear links be identified between the LTCCP, COPs, the LGA 2002 and all aspects of the LTCCP be aligned with "taking a sustainable development approach"**.
- That within this approach public transport and roading be treated as largely separate issues.
- That the Christchurch City Council adopts the Steady State Economy model as its basic analytical framework rather than the Standard Economic model
- That the Christchurch City Council engages in discussions with Community Energy Action to determine the possibility of a cooperative, synergic relationship with them.

- Early learning centres: that plans for outsourcing or selling the listed centres be put on hold until the criteria for City Council funding of these and related centres be clearly established.
- Tram extension route: that this proposal is not a public transport issue and the allocation of \$11.5m should not be part of the LTCCP at this time of financial stringency.
- Transfer of the Town Hall to Vbase: that this should not be proceeded with, because of the greater "distance" that will result between the Councillors (who represent the people) and the Town Hall administration.
- Infrastructure charitable trust. It is understood that this will be used to channel \$10m or more a year into infrastructure. This will be a complex change, and is to be put in place primarily for tax reasons. We submit that this should not be proceeded with, since among other reasons it has the potential to be a risky and an expensive move, when tax laws can be changed by the government at relatively short notice.
- Policy on determining "significance". As described, this move would appear to considerably simplify current procedures, with rather vague ideas about process, to the extent that it looks as if it will not have any "teeth", and risks being a policy to support "anything goes". We question the wisdom of this. We submit that the current policy on "significance" should not be changed.
- That borrowing at a lower rate than the interest from City Council investments is probably valid in the short term, but is highly questionable in the longer term and requires much greater community consultation before going ahead.
- That decisions made around the complex issue of "Intergenerational equity requires much greater community consultation before going ahead.
- That the Convention centre expansion of \$45m, would appear to be inadvisable, and that this proposal should be shelved.
- That while supportive of the new bus exchange, we submit that buses as the central component of public transport in Christchurch are not being given enough attention. We submit that further work is needed in this area, with the expectation of increased capital investment at an early stage.
- That community grants be held at least at the current level, preferably increased, to allow for the Council to truly reflect its legal imperative under the LGA to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities;
- There appears to be no reference to the Crown's responsibility to take account of the Treaty of Waitangi we submit that there should be a section on this.

[New Video Site for the planet: Earthprotect.Com](http://Earthprotect.Com)

Featuring Thousands of Environmental videos to impact sustainable change EarthProtect.com is a worldwide environmental hub that brings like-minded people together, connecting them to experts and global resources in order to raise awareness and promote action to sustain our world. Featuring thousands of videos and films, EarthProtect.com covers all aspects of our Earth organized in 13 environmental categories to help easily access targeted information. Plus, through the site's user-friendly interconnected features, users can easily join forums, blog, use the online "green" business directory and get involved with over 24 nonprofit partners to further their knowledge and impact sustainable change.

[SOC buys data projector](#)

SOC has recently bought a data projector to enable it to better make educational presentations on sustainability related matters at a variety of venues. Thanks to the Christchurch City Council for providing grant funding to assist with this. As a benefit of membership SOC members can hire the projector for \$25 a time (to cover bulb and replacement costs). To do so please contact Dave Evans at dave.evans@alliedtelesyn.co.nz



Free bike checks, service and maintenance: 4.00 -6.00 pm each Monday. Latimer Square.

CCC applies to ECAN for right to discharge more sewage into Avon and Heathcote:

SOC member Tom Taylor recently submitted on an application from the City Council to ECAN to dump sewage in Christchurch rivers up to twice a year from each of its 23 sewage overflows. This is a higher rate than what it is currently allowed (once in 2 years), but most of the overflows can't meet this standard so the City Council is applying to bring itself into a compliant position. Currently most sewage outfalls discharge less often than twice a year with only 6 discharging once every 2 years or longer. However, population growth means that they will discharge much more often than at present in the future, but the council doesn't mention this in its application. ECAN should refuse the application and get the council to provide details of the increased volumes of sewage they want to put in our rivers (as required by the RMA but not in the application). The application date for submissions on this recently closed.

"We have forgotten who we are, we have lost our sense of wonder and connectedness, we have degraded the earth and our fellow creatures, and we have nowhere else to go . . . "
- Earth Charter

Renewal in Roimata

Roimata is a historical name for a small suburb bounded by Ferry Road, Richardson Terrace, Brougham St, and Ensors Road. This neighbourhood consists of around 860 households and is already starting the journey towards becoming one of Christchurch's first 'transition suburbs'. Roimata community members kicked off their year with gusto in early March, cleaning up their bit of the Heathcote River (Ferry Road bridge through to Opawa road bridge). Between 30 and 40 people pitched in for just over an hour and collected bags and bags of rubbish. Some of the items retrieved astonished or dismayed us all - car parts, children's toys and a tricycle, polystyrene, fencing wire, kitchen utensils and even used nappies. A significant visible difference was made in a very short time requiring minimal resources. Roimata's river group have developed a short document intended to guide other groups on how to organise their own river clean up based on this experience.



hardworking Jane in the reeds

Future activities include a meeting about Civil Defence and Neighbourhood Watch, a field trip to Project Lyttelton, a spring event focussing on growing food, a neighbourhood-wide garage sale

and a drop-in neighbourhood planning session. Whilst some of these activities might seem unrelated to addressing climate change or peak oil, the first few years of Roimata activities are designed to build the social networks and trust required for a small community to prepare for powering down. Key phrases consistently used by organisers are to 'think like a village', and "we are small enough to have a great sense of community, but big enough to solve our own problems."

For enquiries about Roimata, please call Katie Nimmo on 3890 115 or email katie_nimmo@hotmail.com.

The Establishment of a Community Resilience Unit

Extract from an address from ECan Chief Executive, Dr Bryan Jenkins at the launch of the Community Resilience Unit Launch, 26th March 2009

"With the requirement of the Local Government Act amendments in 2002 for councils to contribute to community outcomes to achieve sustainable development, regional councils, such as Environment Canterbury, have a responsibility for being a proactive facilitator of sustainability in addition to being a reactive regulator for environmental protection based on their effects-based management responsibilities under the Resource Management Act.

The success of [some recent initiatives in this area] has led to Environment Canterbury to provide a focus for these activities by establishing the Community Resilience Unit in November 2008. The purpose of the unit is to develop approaches on how to motivate and empower communities so that those communities can develop their resilience to ensure their sustainability. The particular focus is on households, business and schools. The projects will be aligned to Environment Canterbury programmes which are already building community resilience in specific areas, such as civil defence emergency management, natural hazards and pollution prevention.

Sale and Supply of Liquor and Liquor Enforcement Bill

This Bill has been submitted by Lianne Dalziel and is currently before the Justice and Electoral Committee. It would deal with a lot of the issues of concern around alcohol use and abuse such as: lack of community input by giving legal status to local alcohol plans; irresponsible alcohol promotion e.g. alcopops for kids such as "Illicit cola. It's good to be bad"; loss leading (Progressive and Foodstuffs - the main suppliers – are particularly guilty of this); and real penalties for licensees who sell to under-eighteens (they'll lose their license for 5 years not just a few days).

Lianne is running a series of briefings on the Bill: **Tuesday 14 April**, 7:30, St Mary's Church Halswell; **Wednesday 15 April**, 12 pm and 1 pm at Community House and 7:30pm at Oxford Terrace Baptist Church.

The deadline for submissions is **Thursday 23 April** and they can be made via <http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/SC/SubmCalled/0/3/4/49SCJEsaleandsupplyofliquo200904231-Sale-and-Supply-of-Liquor-and.htm>

COMMITTEE ACTIONS

Completed

- Submission on Department of Internal Affairs discussion document: "Building Sustainable Urban Communities".
- Submission on Greater Christchurch Travel Demand Management Strategy and Action Plan
- Purchase of Data Projector. Available for SOC member hire, see earlier article.

In Process

- Work Plan for 2009
- Consideration of relationship between Sustainable and Treaty based development, incorporating recent input from Andrea Lobb.
- Discussions with the Urban Landscape Group, a group focussed on the importance of Indigenous biodiversity are proceeding, with the aim of this group becoming a part of SOC.
- Preparation of DVD of Transition Communities Bus tour

