

Books

Cities for Sale by Leonie Sandercock (Melbourne University Press \$14.40), and *Damned Whores and Gods Police* by Anne Summers (Pelican, \$4.75).

In order to examine the inter-relationships - or potential for inter-relationships - between the newly emerging movements of women's liberation and urban planning, it is useful to study two books which were published in 1975, each of which has been the result of several years' research by a young radical Australian woman.

Cities for Sale by Leonie Sandercock and **Damned Whores and God's Police** by Anne Summers have very little in common yet they complement each other by providing essential background material on the political forces which shape our cities and on the social forces which determine the lives of women.

Anne Summers has chosen the sub-title "The Colonisation of Women in Australia". Her book is about human relationships; about men, women and children; thus her sphere is in essence what goes on inside the four walls of the homes, workplaces and in the social places where these domestic relationships are extended the pubs, schools, sportsgrounds, and so on. In her pages she specifically examines the role of women.

Leonie Sandercock has chosen the sub-title: "Property, Politics and Urban Planning in Australia". Her book is about the built environment; the planning of homes, workplaces, transport systems, commercial centres and recreation spaces and so on. Thus her sphere is in essence outside the four walls of the places dominated by our domestic relationships and is mainly to do with government,

administration, land speculation and community movements. In her pages she inevitably examines the role of men.

Cities for Sale as the name implies, is mainly about land use planning and is an examination of the process of city planning in Australia in its political, historical, social and intellectual context, and it endeavours to show why so many good ideas and good intentions have come to so little.

Leonie sets herself the task of testing "whether a marxist model provides a comprehensive explanation of the present structure of Australian society". (p. 4).

She shows how the meagre planning that has been attempted in Australia's main cities has been frustrated at every level by private ownership of land, by the influence of the speculators and profiteers and by the deification of economic growth and political power.

However, despite her intentions of making a marxist model, and despite her useful historical research, her options for ways of changing our cities are not a marxist challenge to capitalism. She disappoints herself; for, lacking in confidence in revolutionary changes, she proposes a program of "redistributive social justice" or "civilising reforms" for achieving "the kind of community the left aims to bring about". (p. 250).

The piecemeal reforms she advocates fail to add a new dimension to urban planning, and she thus gives a very limited vision of the future. In fact, some of the policies she advocates could reinforce the entrenched tendency for increasing bureaucracy and paternalism by technocrats. The various methods of participation she proposes to give "more ordinary people more say in decisions affecting the

quality of their environment and daily life" are based on experiences of urban pressure groups (resident action, conservationists, anti-pollution campaigns, etc.). She seems to be unaware of the significance of the liberation movement of Blacks and women, and thus does not consider how such forces are an integral part of all campaigns for social change.

Leonie is disappointed in her own conclusions and sadly she asks the last question: "How do we guard against the possibility that those who already win in the market place will also be the winners in the political market place created by the new participatory procedures?" (p. 251).

Leonie partly answers this question in a plea for practical reforms to be based on detailed fact finding and rigorous argument on particular issues coupled with the need to work out a conception of the good society. (See later in this review).

Another part of the answer to Leonie's question can be found in Anne Summers' **Damned Whores and God's Police**. Anne repeatedly shows the futility of striving for mere "equality reforms". She sets out to show that the ruling groups which control the capitalist economy of Australia are composed entirely of white men (p.23). Any lasting liberation is impossible without challenging the present distribution of power which allows a small number of people to control the lives of the majority. The particular contribution she makes which partly finds an answer to Leonie's question is the emphasis she gives throughout her book on the development of self-management which she sees as being fully possible only if the capitalist power relationships are abolished. (p. 463).

Anne justifiably claims that, to date, marxists have concentrated entirely on class relationships and class ideologies and have ignored the oppression of racism and sexism. She makes the important distinction between "feminism" and "female consciousness" (p. 26) pointing out that "female consciousness" is "active acceptance of female roles". This heightened awareness, she points out, can often lead to militant action in consumer groups, resident action groups and other community activities, but it does not help to give women a greater awareness of their sex oppression and therefore does not challenge the status quo to the same extent as those who are conscious of their need for liberation. This is so because these liberationists have identified correctly the sexist division of society which is the main way women are oppressed.

Nevertheless, in her final pages, Anne also seems to be overwhelmed by the obstacles now facing the women's liberation movement. "The sheer enormity of the many components of women's oppression has produced a feeling of impotence, a despair of ever being able to change such a multifarious beast" (p. 471).

Despite these pessimistic last pages, both these books give an overall impression of optimism.

This faith in the future is to be found in Anne's descriptions of the new types of organisation which are enabling women to take their first steps from passive acceptance of isolation and dependence through face to face experiences in networks of mutual aid towards wider control of the forces which previously have constricted their relationships with others.

Similarly, there is no lament for planning in Leonie's descriptions of the ever-gaining popularity of the political theory that social disparities are no longer acceptable, and in the examples she gives to show how conservatism and political neutrality are being increasingly recognised as shackles that must be broken.

It is important to realise that in these campaigns, many of those with "female consciousness" or concern for urban planning are beginning to contribute in their own way to breaking the shackles of their oppression, and should not be dismissed as hopeless, but regarded as an immense potential source for feminist liberation, given more experience, assistance and inspiration.

Until a truly non-oppressive society has been won there will continue to be need for women to independently struggle for their own identity and liberation; but in doing so, and to the extent that the overall vision can be shared by others, there will be mutual endeavour by men and women with many diverse commitments. Within these movements, those who have more advanced consciousness about the nature of oppression will become less fearful of diluting their struggle and therefore will more readily recognise the contribution others are making, and more readily identify those issues which can help raise the consciousness of those whose life experience may be more limited.

Finally, neither book deals **directly** with ecological issues, which are so pertinent to the subject matter of each.

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