

MARVELLOUS MELBOURNE

Reviewed by
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MAKE MELBOURNE MARVELLOUS! A Draft for Wide Discussion on Socialist Alternative Melbourne 2000, by the Socialist Alternative Melbourne Collective, 1985, C/- Communist Party of Australia, 12 Exploration Lane, Melbourne 3000, 68 pages, price \$5.00.

In socialist Melbourne, in the year 2000, large industries will no longer be in private hands; their products will be socially useful and environmentally sound. People will live within easy reach of community centres where they will be able to satisfy most of their shopping, eating, social and entertainment needs; there will be little need for private transport. Most people will hold shelter titles to their houses or flats, giving them security of tenure and freedom from interference. Residents will use and collectively manage a large variety of community services and organisations.

These are some of the projections made by the Socialist Alternative Melbourne Collective in their draft document. The ideas are the result of many years of experience as community activists, of discussions with environmentalists, feminists, unionists and many others. The project is based on the assumption that "progressive people from many different areas and backgrounds potentially share common goals and values — a common vision of the future". *Make Melbourne Marvellous* is an attempt to demonstrate that this assumption is true.

The collective does not claim to be able to take us on an exhaustive tour

of socialist Melbourne in the year 2000. Most readers of this booklet will be able to think of ideas that ought to be incorporated, of changes that ought to be made. This process of addition and criticism is what the collective aims to encourage. Socialist Melbourne will not be built — or planned — in a day, or by one collective.

A city is, above all, a community of people, and the collective's vision of the future centres on ideas about how people will live and relate to each other in a socialist city. There are two ideas, in particular, which make the future Melbourne profoundly different from the city as we know it.

- The concept of cluster and connect: housing, local shops, community services and entertainment areas will be clustered around railway stations and/or major tramstops. Every neighbourhood will be connected to the nearest community centre and to the city centre by means of readily available public transport. The self-managed centres provided in each area will not only be able to satisfy most of the health, child care and recreational needs of residents, but they will also bring people together in a collective enterprise — thus overcoming the isolation, self-centredness and "anomie" of present-day city life.

- The concept of shelter titles: houses will no longer be commodities from which profits can be made. Housing will be valued according to its usefulness. Those people who wish to settle down can obtain a shelter title by making payments equivalent to rent until the value of the house is reached. Housing will be varied, catering to different preferences, life styles, stages of life.

Underlying these concepts is the basic premise of the Alternative Melbourne project: that a socialist



society should be able to satisfy a plurality of individual needs and preferences — more so than will ever be possible under capitalism — and at the same time promote the development of community ties and environmental awareness. From the point of view of the collective, "From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs" means both the encouragement of community responsibility and an appreciation of individual differences.

Within the framework of this ideal, a number of questions can be raised about the concepts of shelter titles and cluster and connect. Would a city made up of clusters satisfy all individuals? Behind the concept of cluster and connect lies the idea that all of us are villagers in our heart of hearts, and would prefer to establish close relationships with our neighbours if only this were possible. But some people love the cosmopolitan nature of a city; they do