

THE LEGACY OF ARIZMENDIARRIETA

A System of Cooperatives as a Means: Climate Emergency, Species Extinction and War

- Dave Kerin

(My dear fellow workers, I have been and remain an organiser and a “stump speaker” on street corners, in workplaces, on union picket lines and in the organising work with others to build Earthworker Cooperative, for a combined period of 50 years. As a result the flow in this paper is more like that in a speech. It rambles and it repeats and reiterates in ways that you may find difficult, I hope not to an extent that it deters you from reading on. Further, I have found that when we change the language base and concepts we use the vast majority of us agree on the outcomes we seek in our attempts to resolve the crisis facing humankind, so I thought it better that I use language and concepts most comfortable to me, for clarity’s sake. I am sure you have found it true as well, that in the active life ideas widen and deepen and cycle back with renewed understandings, even after an idea in its original form has been rejected, as a result of our practice. I do hope that the central ideas, concepts and conclusions drawn from decades of shared practice in the movement for human liberation, are accessible and useful to you. In solidarity with you all, Dave Kerin).

As I am writing this in a global context, please let me start by acknowledging that I write to you from First Nations’ lands of Australia, which were never ceded. I want to acknowledge elders past, present and future from all First Nations. Earthworker Cooperative seeks to do practical Treaty work around the use of cooperative surpluses, as well as the conscious inclusion of First Nations worker-ownership in all Earthworker cooperatives.

White Australia is trailing Indigenous leadership in relation to *cooperative culture*, not only because there is a strong cooperative movement amongst First Nations people in Australia, lasting over many decades. There is also the historic fact of 60,000+ years of First Nations’ experience *before* white invasion, where there was no separation between the satisfaction of need through equal, needs-based sharing (distributed ownership), spirituality and culture.



We recognise that if we listen, we have so much to learn from our First Nations brothers and sisters, *while we accept that can only happen within the context of Treaty*. There is so much we all have to do to build in the structures able to stand against a three-way crisis which threatens our very survival, and those structures have to be accessible by all!

We have been able to play a small but useful role in partnership with Victorian Aboriginal Housing, to provide solar hot

water systems in some of the Housing stock. We will expand this role under one of our objectives, which is to pay 5% of all surpluses towards the community sector.

Earthworker Cooperative has so far to go in building relations with the First Nations of this country, but we will continue to reach towards the hand of Treaty, so graciously being offered by them.

ARIZMENDI



‘With cooperation, we can act in solidarity, and in solidarity, we can make progress without masters, which is to say, with freedom and justice, and with social and economic emancipation.’

Arizmendi combined this sort of understanding and vision, with the practical steps necessary to achieve it.

That is his offering to humankind and it is Mondragon’s strength.



Being witness to and an active opponent of fascism in the 1930’s, he helped build a cooperative network able to survive and then thrive under Franco’s fascism. Lasting beyond the dictator’s passing until today, shows Arizmendi’s enormous strength, courage and creativity. It also shows the flexibility inherent in a distributed ownership system.

Over time that strength and flexibility has seen the beginnings of a new set of economic and cultural relations. Solidarity leading to cooperation creating subsidiarity, where those most affected by decisions are more often than not the people making those decisions.

A culture where the relationship between the individual and the collective is more integrated, because in the work of the collective an attempt is made to place the person at its centre.

THE ARIZMENDI GATHERING

Fr Jose Maria Arizmendiarieta, founder of the Mondragon cooperatives, died in 1976. We will mark his contribution with a global zoom on November 29th each year into the future.

Covid has trimmed our expectation, however we are reaching out to people globally seeking involvement and to learn more about cooperative experiences around the world.

With others from around the world we began to organise towards a November 29th commemoration of his life and contribution in 2021. We believe the event will assist all of us understand more about Arizmendi and cooperatives. From our Earthworker perspective in Australia it will assist us *to look at increasing the power of the global cooperative movement to deal in very practical ways with building an alternative to climate emergency, species extinction and the growing, global war economy.*

As part of this work we want to empower people with a deeper understanding of Australian and global cooperative histories. To build and deepen our understandings over coming years in *every* country.

Unity rather than agreement, in fact an outcome of unity *over* agreement, is called for if we are to effectively deal with this three way crisis.

For us Arizmendi and Mondragon are a beautiful place to begin. As Arizmendi says:

'The redistribution of wealth is necessary, but the socialisation of education is more pressing, to be able to think about the true humanisation of work.'







An Earthworker equivalent states that the education, training and jobs we need to deal with the three way crisis, must provide a capacity for mass engagement, rather than a sole reliance upon transactions in a private market which has caused the crisis. This mass engagement requires an economics uniquely offered by cooperatives and mutuals:

“Earthworker Cooperative: Working our way out of the climate emergency.”



Arizmendi studied widely and was not afraid to look squarely at the eclectic nature of the sources of truth, absorbed as they were in the varied human experience.

Left to right:

-  **Peter Kropotkin - Catholic Worker Workshops on his ideas and of course his influence across Spain**
-  **Emmanuelle Mounier - Distributist theoretician and activist**
-  **Peter Maurin - Distributist and co-founder of Catholic Worker**
-  **Dorothy Day – Like Arizmendi influenced by Mounier and Maurin and an example of the committed life**
-  **Mao and the cooperative/commune. Arizmendi was known to provocatively wave Mao's thought at people who perhaps figured they had all the answers**
-  **Paulo Freire – Contributed considerably to the theory and practice of Liberation Theology.**

A SOLUTION TO THREE WAY CRISIS IN DEMOCRATIC ECONOMICS

*“It is quite wrong to try founding a theory on observable magnitudes alone... It is the theory which decides what we can observe.”—Albert Einstein quoted in *The Facts of Economic Growth*, CI Jones, Stanford.*

There are in Australia in 2021 four responses to *climate emergency, species extinction and the permanent war economy*. Despite a potential to be otherwise, they are largely disconnected from each other:

- 🍷 Government responses which, apart from the State of Victoria to some extent, have not led at all on *the systemic nature of the crisis*
- 🍷 Protest
- 🍷 Private sector market based responses which are unable to plan. A private capitalist over there sets up a solar company and a private capitalist over here establishes a wind generation company, both of which are in “competition” with each other
- 🍷 Earthworker Cooperative, part of an Australian and global movement for systemic solutions, which eliminates the phoney separation of economy from ecology. Where we do not externalise our responsibility to the rest of nature as a mere cost when we determine value, and in turn, where we see labour as the source of all wealth rather than a cost in the process of creating it.

When we unpack these responses we see that many of the green capitalists have a sincere wish to deal with our need to confront the climate emergency and species extinction. However, at best we see them establish a set of business arrangements which profit from those needs but cannot eliminate them.

On the question of counter-posing an Economics of Peace to the global War Economy, we were first alerted by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2002 that the military was by far the largest industry in the world. Private capitalist corporations, along with Governments who are encouraging more “defence industry” jobs growth, are investing heavily into and propping up the military industries. So two of the responses to climate emergency and species extinction actually support growth in the military industries that are a blocker to change.

On protest as a function of consciousness-raising, it is an alive question in the social

People must recognize their limitations, their dependence, they must recognize the hierarchy of values, the primacy of reason over instinct, and the existence of a natural law that connects everything in nature and themselves as part of it.

Arizmendi “On Human Maturity”

movements as to whether we can move beyond it as *our sole response*. Earthworker Cooperative believes we can move towards actual *democratic change within the economy*.

Protest alone cannot build alternatives, but of course it can demand that they occur. That makes the role of protest crucial.

However, for a couple of decades now *many of the alternatives* to climate emergency, species extinction and the global war economy, the three-way crisis, have been described and defined. Taught to us to the rhythm of the boots of hundreds of millions of marchers, rallying to the banners of sustainability and peace all around the world.

Solutions are pretty clear, thanks to all of us “Protesters”. Solar, wind and water, regeneration of lands, seas and habitat and of course, if any of that is to be possible, peace.

However when we drill down, we begin to see the massively complex structures and interconnectivities involved in the chains of destruction when we speak about climate emergency, species extinction and war. Whole economies and millions of jobs are both causing, and *result from*, this three-way crisis.

In Australia we have one very obvious, demonstrable example of this through the experience of our coal industry. *From the day it was privatised by a neoliberal Government, Coal immediately saw renewable energy as a competitor.* Yet, as we have come to see, no amount of competition between these different modes for producing energy will resolve the climate emergency!

When our power was in public hands under the State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV), they already had solar, wind and water on the drawing board. These were simply another way of producing power and not the competitor they became after privatisation.

Of course there is a direct connection, through decades now, between that neoliberal privatisation policy and the events in Glasgow 2021, leading to the “blah,blah,blah” the young angels outside COP 26 refer to when they take aim at Australia’s compromised stance on fossil fuels.

It goes without saying that we would have very little without the young people who were at COP26 because as we’ve said, they catalyse events in the world. However the problem actually runs a lot deeper, because it is systemic: It is not simply a matter of wrong policy decisions by corporations and Governments, for instance in choosing fossil fuels over renewables. Rather it is “free” market capitalism which opposes the involvement of humankind in planning the future of the planet we are a part of, which is the problem.

The Earthworker Project is working to bring cooperatives and mutuals, into *a common space* where we can begin to *put a democratically determined plan on the ground* which responds to the real needs of people and planet.

In the early years for Earthworker Project, 1997, 1998 and up through 2000, we researched and collated data from around the world. One of the sources we used at that time was the eminent Worldwatch Institute reports:

Lester R Brown, one of the founders of Worldwatch Institute wrote in *Challenges of the New Century* in 2000 “The market.....does not respect the sustainable yield thresholds of natural systems. In a world where demands of the economy are pressing against the limits of natural systems, relying exclusively on economic indicators to guide investment decisions is a recipe for disaster.

“Historically, for example, if the supply of fish was inadequate, the price would rise, encouraging investment in additional fishing trawlers. This market system worked well. But today, with the fish catch already exceeding the sustainable yield of many fisheries, investing in more trawlers in response to higher seafood prices will simply accelerate the collapse of fisheries. A similar situation exists with forests, rangelands, and aquifers. The gap between economists

and ecologists in their perception of the world as the new century begins could not be wider.

“Economists look at grain markets and see the lowest grain prices in 20 years—a sure sign that production capacity is out running effective demand, that supply constraints are not likely to be a problem for the foreseeable future. But ecologists see water tables falling in key food-producing countries. Knowing that 480 million of the world’s 6 billion people are being fed with grain produced by over pumping aquifers, they are worried about the effect of eventual aquifer depletion on food production.

“Economists see a world economy that has grown by leaps and bounds over the last half-century, but ecologists see growth based on the burning of vast quantities of cheap fossil fuels, which is destabilizing the climate. They are keenly aware that some-one buying a gallon of gasoline pays the cost of pumping the oil, of refining it into gasoline, and of distributing the gasoline to the service station, but not the cost to society of future climate disruptions.

“Again, while economists see booming economic indicators, ecologists see an economy that is altering the climate with consequences that no one can foresee.”

Formed right at the junction of the contradiction outlined by Lester Brown, the Earthworker Project tried a range of different options to begin to deal with the three way crisis. At that time in 1999/2000 we were involved in successful negotiations with Enron and Siemens, about wind generator manufacturing in the Latrobe Valley, where our coal comes from. When Enron collapsed we saw capitalism was too unstable and did not offer systemic solutions. It became clear they were unable to do the long term planning required, and ultimately too locked-in to the big four: fossil fuels, petrochem, plastics and military.

So the Earthworker Project began an investigation of what had been achieved by working people elsewhere in the world. *Mondragon* being one amazing example. We began to investigate the proposition of building *an integrated system of cooperatives* to deal with the three-way crisis.

Our investigations unearthed exciting and visionary possibilities, such that we committed to place an integrated system of unionised cooperatives and social movements in Australia and globally. We committed to work to place the social sector of the economy in the lead on what is clearly a systemic crisis facing the Earth System.

That meant we needed to build a model that people could feel, see and touch and importantly, a model capable of being quickly scaled out to produce the sort of massive impact on the crisis that we all need.

So, no pressure!

All of this while unions were trying to stay on our feet through decades of assault from the rollout of the so-called “free” market, and its ideological and parliamentary representatives. The “free” market promised a production process which would be more effective and efficient at meeting needs, but which is more and more constrained by the narrow interests of

an ever decreasing number of truly, very rich shareholder-owners. And they will of course never lead on a democratic economics, based on cooperative ownership with one-person-one-vote. Neoliberal owners see cooperatives as their ideological opponents, just as they see unions when they are true to their purpose in challenging capitalism.

And so capitalism sentences the vast majority, working people and their families, to be limited to the acts of ever increasing production and consumption. “Growth”, yes, but it is a growth which has metastasised through the Earth System, deepening the three-way crisis.

The damage done to Australia by “free” market political economy is nowhere more evident than in the manufacturing sector. Union-side, many of you lived through this damage, so you know about that. In countries like Australia, jobs offshored, casualised, families unsupported through existential change. While wreaking ecological havoc in those economies which are not in the position to say “No!”

In Australia this has led to Pauline Hanson, the United Australia Party and the rise of the far right generally. In America similarly, this same experience led to Trump and his far right coalition. We see fascists in European Parliaments once again and “leading” Governments in Latin America as well.

Such political shifts are built on top of decades of corporate and Government stalling, of funding phoney “community” opposition groups and other dirty tricks, and generally spreading fear rather than solutions, within some of our most vulnerable global communities.

All of that in order to derail action to save the life supports of the Earth System by Liberal National Coalition Governments in Australia and many Governments around the world, in service to capitalists who see their wealth and power under threat.

Some of us have now had 50 years of involvement in unions in Australia. By the time we established Earthworker Cooperative around 25 years ago we had been Deregistered, Derecognised and in other ways outlawed. For standing up to what is now called neoliberalism. We witnessed this neoliberal “free” market ideology free up employers and investors, through deep regulation of labour. This has devolved to a point where many of the functions of an organised labour movement within a representative democracy have been criminalised. It has resulted in a distortion of any realistic notion of value by externalising the costs of damage to the Earth System.

Neoliberal laws have led to the shackling of union movements globally, attempting to block unions from offering leadership on climate by eliminating their legal right to show solidarity. The “free” market made it illegal for unions to put the measures and policies needed to address climate emergency into their union agreements.

Successful “free” market capitalism requires that there be large numbers of people globally who are unable to access its benefits. Only a minority can ever benefit, otherwise concepts like profit and the irrational ways in which the capitalist market determines value, worth and priorities, becomes obsolete.

Value, worth and priorities under capitalism involve externalisation of both the true cost of labour into the depressed labour economies, and damage to the environment of which we are an organic part, in order to boost profits.

As the inspirational Liberation Theologian Gustavo Gutierrez, born in 1928, his life spanning much of the same history as Arizmendi's, said:

"But the poor person does not exist as an inescapable fact of destiny. His or her existence is not politically neutral, and it is not ethically innocent. The poor are a by-product of the system in which we live and for which we are responsible. They are marginalized by our social and cultural world. They are the oppressed, exploited proletariat, robbed of the fruit of their labour and despoiled of their humanity. Hence the poverty of the poor is not a call to generous relief action, but a demand that we go and build a different social order."

Alongside Gustavo's "poor person" we can add "climate emergency and species extinction."

Under a capitalism free to live out its purpose, its nature, what people have is declared to be worth more *because* others cannot have it. As it gasps for oxygen similar to a Covid patient who is terminal, the Earth System is demonstrating clearly that we cannot continue to determine worth as a quantity valued against something humankind does not need, such as the rise and fall of the profits of a minority.

In the developing and colonised countries across the twentieth century notions of value were affected by struggles around the right of nations to self-determination and independence. However these rights cost. The risks for capitalism were too great as their imperial structure of first, second and third world countries, maintained by colonial armies and administrations, combined with tariffs and protection in the first world, became dysfunctional. The liberation struggles became an unaffordable cost as countries were won back by their own peoples.

A new structure was needed. One which, like the older colonial structure did not require that capitalists pay *the real price* of goods, labour and environment, but minus the costly older colonial practices of maintaining troops on the ground. The older system lived under the ever-present anti-colonial struggles and threat of their spread. (Demonstrably, lessons are never learnt once and for all, and must be repeated, as we have seen in recent years with harsh lessons for capitalists and their Governments, in Afghanistan and Iraq).

The anti-colonial revolutions were of course one of the imperatives driving neoliberalism. Because these movements *did spread* into the colonising countries, through the solidarity that was shown by organised labour movements, peace and environment movements.

Neoliberalism was born while countries that had spent decades in the frontlines of national independence struggles, discovered that colonialism had taken on a new form in "free" trade.

While in countries like Australia, America and Europe, from the Second World War until the 1970's it had been seen as "common sense" that communities should be paid wages which allowed people to consume at a first world standard, that now changed in the mid to late 1970's, as neoliberalism was rolled out.

Like other parts of the world Australia's economy was structurally adjusted and from that point onwards we see unearthed a major contradiction at the heart of capitalism:

While Capitalism seeks to drive down the cost of our work, at the same time it needs to sell more goods and services to us to consume.

There is the Global Financial Crisis in a nutshell.

Towards the last part of the twentieth century and into the twenty first century we have seen the strengthening of an economics without the fundamental right for unions to organise in pursuit of community needs. Both at work and in protection of our neighbourhoods. Even in what was once the first world.

The first step in the roll out of neoliberalism, all around the world wherever there were viable union movements, was to eliminate union resistance. That started with the Secondary Boycott laws, but more on that later.

It was during this period that the conditions were created which led to the three-way crisis. A combination of anti-union laws with restrictive penalty provisions, casualisation, sham contracting, offshoring of jobs, privatisation and restrictions on (sometimes the elimination of) environmental regulation, has heightened the neoliberal capitalist assault on the Earth System.

Around the world and in Australia “free” market, multinational capitalists and their political representatives have gone on the attack for 50 years, in a radical restatement of their identity, and dismantling various forms of social contract.

For the bulk of the twentieth century, Australian capitalism and by default our working class communities were relatively protected. “Frugal comfort” (In Australia the *Harvester Judgement of 1907*), meant relief from some of the worst excesses of the class war, albeit only temporarily.

The Harvester Judgement arose out of the Depression and massive strikes of the 1890’s and especially on the Waterfront and in 1891 the Shearers Strike.

1891! The same year of course that saw Pope Leo xiii present Rerum Novarum. All around the world a rapacious “free” capitalism, aggressive and violent, was on the attack against organised labour movements.

The Shearers strike in Australia, at the onset of the 1890’s Depression, was pivotal, here and globally.

It was after all about ownership. It was about the right of workers to own the labour which we sell and to be able to unionise and to fairly contract the sale of that labour.

Importantly unionists demanded the right to sell their labour *without* the terms and conditions of that contract-of-sale applying to others who had not negotiated them. Unionists explained that where employers and their Governments enforced the breakdown of union conditions, using anti-union labour, that was a means of neutering the power of their union which had negotiated worker members. Sustained attack by the armed State ultimately broke the strike, however not without enormous losses to the employers.

John Paul II, writing on the 90th anniversary of Rerum Novarum in 1981, explained that it is:

“...the right common to all to use the goods of the whole of creation: the right to private property is subordinated to the right to common use, to the fact that goods are meant for everyone.” He goes on *“...property is acquired first of all through work in order that it may serve work.”*

Even more strongly, Pope John Paul noted that *Rerum Novarum* established that:

“This concerns in a special way ownership of the means of production. Isolating these means as a separate property in order to set it up in the form of ‘capital’ in opposition to ‘labour’ – and even to practice exploitation of labour – is contrary to the very nature of these means and their possession. They cannot be possessed against labour, they cannot be possessed for possession’s sake, because the only legitimate title to their possession – whether in the form of private ownership or in the form of public or collective ownership – is that they should serve labour, and thus... make possible... the universal destination of goods and the right to common use of them.”

Both *Rerum Novarum* and Pope John Paul’s later document “On Human Work” stress the fact that capital is:

“....the work of generations, it is equally true that capital is being unceasingly created through the work done with the help of all these means of production, and these means can be seen as a great workbench at which the present generation of workers is working day after day.”

Unions, labour movement socialists, and Arizmendi have each in their own way supported a framework of Economic Democracy, within which such labour can occur.

After the Shearers strike and the shootings and jailing of unionists from the shearing sheds and on the waterfront, workers continued to organise and to prepare better and bigger. Here and around the world. Workers’ movements were on the rise and challenging, in unions and cooperatives. From the middle of the 19th century in Australia unions and cooperatives began to rise.

In 1856 in Melbourne, Victoria, Australian workers were the first to win the 8 hour day. Their movement was called The 888 Movement: 8 hours work, 8 hours recreation and 8 hours rest. Arising out of the triple eight movement workers in Melbourne contributed their own wages and built the first Trades Hall building in the world.

These events came hot on the heels of the Eureka Stockade, in 1854, which in turn grew out of the creation of enormous wealth created during the gold rush, giving working people real leverage in the pursuit of their of rights. The political milieu created out of the rebellion at Eureka, combined with political prisoners such as Chartists from England and Republicans from Ireland, saw the early unions achieve tremendous strength and a visionary commitment to a workers’ commonwealth.

While all of this was happening, in America hundreds of working people at a time were being sold on slave blocks as the resistance to slavery continued to build. Like a blessing on our country, freed American slave, John Joseph, engaged for freedom at the Eureka Rebellion!

Workers in Australia saw that one major reason for the defeats of the 1890’s was the lack of political representation of the labour movement in our Parliaments. It was argued that without a legislative presence by labour at the heart of the nation, then the armed State would always side with Capital. Ultimately all of these events led to the founding of the Australian Labor Party, a process which started in 1891, and in 1920 the formation of the Communist Party.

The long defunct Socialist Labor Party had a big influence, throughout the different colonies in Australia from its founding in 1887, and during the events of 1891. Victorian labour movement historian Verity Burgmann explains that, like all political organisations it was highly factionalised, but that one major strand agitated for a strategy involving support for both unions and cooperatives, as the appropriate means to establish a socialist Australia.

Employers and their political representatives were worried. They understood that you can only maintain a strategy of the iron fist for so long. Persist and you risk that your class opponents will learn to defend themselves, they will organise more powerfully and, as debates of the time in Australian Parliaments indicated, you will insure a class war lasting years, with a further risk that the majority will win.

After Federation of the colonies in 1901 which formed the Australian nation, the Arbitration and Conciliation Act was legislated in 1904, to establish a registration process to sanction those unions who agreed to commit to the constraints and restrictions dictated by the State, and where the State intervened when agreement could not be reached between workers and bosses, via negotiation.

Hence in 1907, the Harvester Judgement insured “frugal comfort” for a male, his partner and three children. A social contract was agreed which guaranteed Protectionism for Capitalists in return.



Also in 1907 the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, nick named the Wobblies) was formed in Australia. A fork in the road was reached: Frugal comfort versus class struggle to achieve democratic socialism. Frugal comfort was pursued by the majority and a social contract was created.

The Wobblies went on to play a major role in opposition to conscription and involvement in the First World War with many spending lengthy sentences in Australian prisons. Many remained true to the ideals of their youth across their working and active lives.

The First World War 1914-1918 split Australian society, our unions, the social movements such as the women's movement, and at the tail end of the war saw a successful Russian revolution.

Nothing would be the same!

Some Australian troops did not get home until the early 1920's after fighting as part of a global capitalist intervention force against the new Soviet Union. At its peak this intervention against the new Government reached 250,000 troops, not counting the Tsarist forces.

What would have happened in America if, after its revolutionary war against English colonialism, just as the new Government is trying to consolidate itself, an army of 250,000 was lobbed onto its border? Or such a force landed in Australia after Federation was declared? Killing community leaders, priests known to be sympathetic to the revolution, doctors, anyone with a role to play in the new country? Sabotage of bridges and other forms of infrastructure? Destruction of farms and resultant food shortages?

It is certain! Any country, whatever the social system governing it, would face the same problems: Shortages, a constant and necessarily paranoid war footing, the growth of entrenched interests separate from the people within governing bodies and organisations. Particularly because, as the revolutionists themselves stated repeatedly, they did not have the expertise to establish a market of any sort, let alone a market based upon a more equal distribution of wealth.

This is so much about cooperatives! Just listen to Lenin as early as 1918 in this short piece "Cooperative Societies":

"We are all of the opinion that the cooperative societies are one of the gains of the socialist party. There lies the great difficulty of socialist gains; there lies the difficulty and aim of victory. Capitalism deliberately divided the various sections of the population. This division must disappear once and for all, and society as a whole must be converted into a single cooperative society of the working people." He goes on "Today only one thing is needed, a unanimous desire to join this single and universal cooperative society with an open heart." (Note also that Lenin's last written pamphlet, a few years after this piece and just before he died from the effects of a prior assassination attempt, was called "On Cooperatives." In that pamphlet he stated once and for all that the cooperatives must be placed at the heart of the Soviets or Workers' Councils. That without cooperatives the Soviets cannot function as socialist).

That is such a different message than the message coming out of the cold war, isn't it!

The Russian revolution affected what occurred in every country from its inauguration. Despite the fact that some decades have passed since the demise of the entity which ultimately grew out of the early years of the Soviet Union. However it must be said that, just as we are now doing with Arizmendi and Mondragon, we must put ourselves in the boots of the people who made the revolutions in Russia 1905 and 1917, because the Basque Countries and Spain, and *every other* country, were obviously affected by the events of the Russian revolution, behaved in response to those events.

After all, the fascists grew out of the call from capitalist leaders to eliminate communists, socialists, social democrats and anarchists in Italy, Germany, Portugal, Hungary, Poland, France, Romania, Croatia and of course, Spain, to stop the spread of revolution. Capitalists and their supportive right wing Governments attempted to drive left leaderships out of the workers' movements in all capitalist countries. Cooperatives and collectives of all sorts, like unions, were seen as part of a threatening economic democracy.

Capitalists financed the fascists' campaigns and crucially their recruitment campaigns. Capitalists uniformed them, armed them and aimed them at their opponents (So much history around this which you can access, but one I like is Michael Parenti's work on the rise, nature and ongoing threat from fascism. For instance *"Blackshirts and Reds"* and *"Dirty Truths"*).

Therefore, because of the pivotal and formative role that the Russian revolution played, it becomes important to understand the feelings of brotherhood and sisterhood; the policies which encapsulated the heartfelt belief in real equality and therefore authentic freedom to live in the way one chooses, without harm; to take the teachings of love central to Christianity and to socialism, whether it was evident in the life of a Tolstoy or an Arizmendi or a Lenin, and to look at the question:

"What sort of economics is required in order to build compassion and solidarity into the fabric of human social relations?"

We must remember that the social contract, such as it was in the capitalist countries, arose because of the pressure created by, and *in relation to*, the Russian revolution of 1905 and 1917 and the global rise of union power and the organised labour movement from the 19th century onwards.

That is another reason why the foundations for neoliberalism were dug in the 1970's, because after decades of military intervention into, and destabilisation of, post capitalist societies, it had become difficult for working class communities globally to determine what was true, what was real. Sound familiar? Added to the fact that the colonies were continuing to drive out their colonisers, creating an existential crisis for capitalism, a space was created which necessitated the end of the social contract under capitalism.

In Australia its end began in 1977 with the introduction of the Secondary Boycott laws outlawing the only sort of solidarity that could have forced a halt to the structural adjustment awaiting us.

Our union leaders at the time, experienced through many industrial battles, thought they could "duck and weave" the new laws. Right now, after decades of laws built on top of the anti-solidarity laws, unions cover only round 10% of workers in the private sector. Sometimes you cannot duck and weave. Sometimes you must stand outside unjust laws, endure the pain and build an alternative at the forge.

"But," I hear you ask "What's all this about unions got to do with cooperatives?" Well given the strength of unionism coming out of the 19th and into the 20th Centuries, workers in their unions came to rely more on extracting rights and a more just share of the wealth they created, from capitalists.

Unfortunately both here and internationally, and with a lot of help from capitalist opponents, cooperatives and the politics of distributed ownership were split off from unions. The better unions were of course led by the left because they understood the systemic nature of class and that framed their day to day unionism.

In Australia, with a lot of political effort by the right in a cold war environment, that meant rural and financial cooperatives came to dominate. As a result there was very little work put into building solidarity between the two arms of the working class movement. As well, the best and most progressive unions were led by unity election tickets between communists and

others socialists who were in the Labor Party, and as the cold war strengthened *a sometimes bitter mistrust* was whipped up between our unions and cooperatives which were perceived as being linked to the bosses, capitalism and intervention into countries like Vietnam.

Earthworker cooperative was formed to bring the strength and power still remaining in our unions into unity with cooperatives based upon distributed ownership. To increase the size of the social sector, using workers capital in the form of Superannuation to assist. Cooperatives integrated through democratic planning can set benchmarks in dealing with the three way crisis facing humankind and the planet.

To rebuild the presence and power of unions, bad laws must be broken because that is the right and democratic thing to do. Clearly and demonstrably if bad laws are not broken then people won't join unions.

Along with protectionism, the social contract, indeed frugal comfort, were eliminated and we find ourselves at the same fork in the road our forebears faced in 1907, when the Wobblies arrived on the scene, only now with an even more powerful set of *environmental imperatives* acting upon us.

For a significant part of the twentieth century unionism, housing, education, healthcare, welfare, pensions, public transport were won throughout first world countries but especially in Australia, to a level which no progressive social theorist of the 19th and early 20th centuries would have thought possible under capitalism.

Indeed, in an entirely connected way, for the vast majority of the worlds people those conditions *still* remain out of reach because of capitalism, *because* initially of the tariff walls and protection in countries like ours, *and now because* of the “free” market.

Let us be clear, first world nations did so well *because* third world, colonised countries did so poorly. And that is why when developing countries point out that developed countries created their wealth by damaging the life supports of the Earth System and therefore need to do more than others over coming decades, they are correct.

Since its introduction the neo-liberal “free” trade agenda, seeing the nation state as an obstacle, has been and remains in the process of creating a first, second and third world sector within every country on the planet.

Those of us in our 70's now, who have been afforded the privilege to remain active in the movement for human liberation, have been witness to these changes, and to the conditions which gave rise to them:

The independence struggles fought by colonised nations against their colonisers, from the Second World War and still proceeding in some parts of the world now, and the shrinking resource base of the planet.

Both these conditions were and still are adding to the cost for, and of, capitalism.

Neoliberalism thinks to externalise those costs largely onto the working people and our planet all around the globe, as it does any other cost, blind to the truth that they are using a nuke to dig a gold mine; as a system they, and inadvertently therefore we, are relying upon totally inappropriate market-based, competitive options.

Government policies in Australia and around the world, such as deregistration of unions, casualisation, privatisation, sham contracting and offshoring of jobs have of course powerfully assisted that process. While “Free” Trade Agreements, in what once was the third world, have seen many “push down to stand up.” This has created a new class stratification from super-rich down through to a struggling middle class, through lower paid workers and then right down to the bottom rung and the sickening use of slavery once again, in the new neoliberal paradigm (ABC Radio National 1/11/2021 on the Facebook dilemma where *virtual “slave blocks”* have been selling our fellow workers, once again).

Every country is experiencing the same pressure from multinational corporations to disconnect their nation from its rights, its publicly owned assets, its culture and our environment, in return for investment.

In Australia, since 1977 and the introduction of the Secondary Boycott laws, 45 D&E, we have seen our governments move away from rights-based economics. A massive system of fines, deregistration and forced amalgamations of unions, and more and more constraining and restrictive legislation has been introduced. The Building Industry Improvement Act, Fairwork Australia and now a return of the Australian Building Construction Commission (ABCC) special police, added to a Code Compliance which, in 2017 saw much of what normal union agreements could contain, disallowed, illegal.

This growing list of State restrictions and penalties placed upon the right to organise, all received their start in the most damaging of laws, the secondary boycott laws 45 D&E in 1977.

Anti-solidarity laws stand us in the shadows of the 1930’s, our feet astride the bones of the anti-fascist dead.

Secondary boycott laws outlaw solidarity which is the primary function of unionism, both our means and the end we seek. When combined with Enterprise Bargaining, which further restricts solidarity down to the enterprise or workplace level, Australian law has gradually criminalised workers solidarity in ways which do not apply to employer solidarity.

For instance, workers solidarity is outlawed under Australian industrial law, using solidarity between groups of workers to prove that secondary boycotts are occurring. They use evidence of union solidarity to prove that a second group of employers are being affected by a dispute.

On the other hand *employers are encouraged to employ a secondary workforce, scabs*. That is clearly the equivalent of a secondary boycott against working people. And as part of this system of undemocratic, unequal regulation and criminalisation of organised labour, owners, shareholders and investors are encouraged to litigate against unions and their members. We become unequal before our courts. Why?

The Market cannot have it both ways. Either we all negotiate freely or we are all regulated: No secondary boycott? Then no secondary workforce! You hire a secondary workforce to dismantle the democratic right of workers to withdraw their labour, then every employer who benefits from that injustice *should* become a party to the dispute.

Underpinning capitalist practice is the ideological position which says that workers in unions, because they are not owners, are therefore merely recipients of the market’s benefits, as

distinct from being the fundamental creators of that market and stakeholders in it. And that ideological position is based on fear. What is that fear based upon?

The major ideological positions taken by capitalist theoreticians since 1917 have related to destroying any movement by labour which took up the question of economic democracy, of ownership.

The fear has never been based upon how much unionists can actively pursue their interests in a bigger share of the wealth they create. It has never been about the money, because of course any monies earned would always be used to consume primarily. The fear rests upon unions completing their journey from democratic voice within the economy to the development of a democratic voice over the economic structure.

To accept a democratic economics is to see owners, shareholders and investors in their true, relative numbers.

The power of capitalists to do what they wish with “their” wealth is defined as a right by capitalist theoreticians. Whereas it can only be viewed as mere privilege taken within the bounds of unequal laws, by economic democrats. Because of course workers create all wealth, the machines which create wealth and the capital which is invested in order to create wealth. And especially in today’s world where so much of the capital invested is workers’ Superannuation.

It is true that in a future economic democracy the market will skew in favour of communities’ vested interests as they are voted forward. However we will see a truer reflection of the needs of the vast majority, and the planet, as economics and democracy continue their evolution towards eachother.

Unions of course, imperfect as any of our community organisations are, have always represented our democratic voice within the economy. The more militant, *potentially*, the bigger the voice. Unions have provided a beginning stage, some semblance, of a democratic space within the Australian economy. And sometimes we have seen our movement break through to pose the question of workers’ control itself, such as the BLF in NSW in the 1970’s (More on the BLF later).

This is the basis for the fear which has engendered far-right, anti-union legislation in most capitalist countries from the 1970’s until now: The capitalist ideological position that the economy is not a democracy.

The Australian people now elect representative governments which have been largely superseded, our rights as citizens taken by rapacious outside economic forces which owe no allegiance to national communities. Now, a growing number of Australians, across some weighty traditional divides, are rejecting a globalisation which continues to reduce our sovereign national rights and as part of that, our individual human rights. Why, we have in the past even subsidised and paid them directly to remain here and continue their structural adjustment of our country (General Motors: According to Industry Minister at the time, Ian McFarlane, GM was supported to the tune of \$1.8 billion dollars to remain here and keep talking to us).

A growing number of Australians oppose ongoing attempts to completely destroy rights as the basis for work, where those rights are replaced with other imperatives which favour shareholders over citizens.

Community concerns are progressively *framed* now by the bigger, substantive questions about national direction, the relationship between economics, climate emergency, species extinction and questions of war and peace. Progressively we are concerned about the sort of democracy we want to live in. At least as much as by concerns to do with consumption of the millions of goods we purchase each year, often unneeded, and which quickly pile up in the hard rubbish outside our front doors on the pavements of our capitals.

The growing presence of ever more restrictive and constraining “Free” Trade Agreements has seen increasing numbers in our communities, especially those involved in manufacturing, learn through bitter redundancy battles that our governments are locked-in to the interests of multinational corporations.

Citizens are locked-out of information needed to decide what is in the best interests of our country through neoliberal, “free” trade devices such as Commercial in Confidence. The ultimate example of this is the Transpacific Partnership Agreement, where the agreement contains clauses which insist that the peoples in signature countries are deliberately excluded from viewing the Agreement’s content, decisions which determine for ever the directions our countries take.

All the while these corporations and their compliant governments continue to build upon the unstable, sandy soil of a massive service sector, in Australia currently in the 80 percentile of all Australian jobs, combined with resource extraction and their dreams of a large military manufacturing sector.

Australian citizens, especially the young, are beginning to demand a new politics:

- Wealth creating manufacturing jobs in new sustainable industries
- *Public Social Partnerships- PSP’s* (See below), where community capital such as Superannuation, partners with governments to democratically manage our resources, power, water, transport, food production and landcare in order to survive climate emergency
- The use of the entire national energy towards the survival of, then a sustainable future for, the biodiversity and life supports of the Earth System, our home
- Development by our communities of a strong social sector of the Australian economy, supported by Australian Federal and State Governments, and which jointly organise Social Sector Fair Trade Agreements – SSFTA’s (See below) with the social sectors in other countries.

What communities are saying now is that they want to move beyond protest, at what is being done or not being done, and towards democratic examples which set the benchmark for what must be done.

Renewable energy sources, like computer technology, await a model of ownership which recognises our interconnection, which is social and collective, which is participatory democratic, and which therefore profoundly reflects the collective nature of production.

Marx said: “Labour is *not the source* of all wealth. *Nature* is just as much the source of use values (and it is surely of such that material wealth consists!) as labour, which itself is only

the manifestation of a force of nature, human labour power.” (Critique of the Gotha Program, 1875).

The task of a democratic economics is to base economics upon the satisfaction of needs, arrived at in turn through democratic means. That is the only path to lasting sustainability. While it must be said that it is not the only path to halting unsustainable activities and practices, it is one of the only responses, next to massive State intervention and planning, which is capable of economically supporting an integrated, interconnected and systemic approach to the Earth System.

The environment crisis is a systemic crisis which has its roots, of course, in the economic structure itself. In the truly deep meaning of the phrase, *the environment crisis is a social crisis*. It requires political decisions about the economy affecting our society and which require us to move towards a strong social sector within our global economies.

Inevitably we are seeing a different, sustainable set of vested interests arise and that requires a responsive social sector of the economy, alongside a regulated private sector and hopefully, a growing public sector.

One of the as yet unmet set of vested interests which working people have is for clean air, clean water/healthy seas and healthy, safe environments for us, our children and other species.

Private capitalists compete and conflict with other groups of private capitalists and the public sector. They externalise the costs of the climate emergency, because it simply costs too much within a solely capitalist framework, to deal with it in a sustainable way. A democratic economics will still see that conflict; what will change will be what we conflict over and the means by which we deal with opposing views.

The massive amount of planning and infrastructure necessary to insure such a set of vested interests are met is unaffordable for capitalism. The returns for private investors will not be big enough; just witness the run down in mass transit to see the result of corporate, investor-driven ownership of massive infrastructures. First jobs drop off, then apprenticeships and training drop off. Then maintenance drops off, then service suffers, as invested capital seeks to cut costs to cope with the lack of return on their investment.

Mark Carney, UN Climate Envoy responsible for pulling together the green finance necessary for transition arising out of COP 26 in Glasgow says:

“Make no mistake the money is here, if the world wants to use it. But that money needs net zero-aligned projects.” Writing in the London’s Telegraph, Ambrose Evans-Pritchard states: *‘The problem is the plumbing, not the lack of money.’* By the way, Ambrose is a pro-capitalist defender of the system.

His point however is correct. The question is, how does capitalism invest in the massive amounts of green infrastructure in the most climate-vulnerable, poorer countries (remembering that wither “they” go, go we all), when that green infrastructure will not provide the means to pay off the debt? Ambrose somewhat symbolically wrote his piece on Guy Fawkes Day!

For the same reasons that capitalism is unable to profit greatly from massive rail, power,

education and health infrastructures *which are accessible and affordable*, so capitalism will be unable to provide a healthy ecosystem.

Not because it cannot afford it, but because it cannot afford its success.

Combine that fact with the experience by working class communities over the 20th Century involving economic planning, and we see the need for democratic inputs into any social sector of the economy which we establish.

Connected to this is the fact that democratic planning, based upon public as distinct from privately-owned science, will clearly define problems around resource extraction, production methods and population. If we ration democratically we *may* begin to halt and, with a great deal of luck, even reverse some components of the environmental crisis.

There is at least a chance and chance is a fertile ground for hope.

The environmental imperative beginning to act upon the global economy and all countries now, is driving us to change. We saw the “freeing-up” of the Market after the “collapse of communism,” when capitalism was free to exploit in the ways it wished and at the rate it wished to. When that combined with the effects of the new environmental imperative upon growth-based economics, the continuing economic crisis, from the start of the Century with the collapse of Enron through to 2008/09 and the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), was inevitable.

With climate emergency and the breakdown of global supply chains, inclement weather making work as we know it impossible, the loss of habitat and species extinction affecting agriculture, clearly, the economic crisis has only started.

Some Governments are moving towards a form of state capitalism, as capitalism did in the 1920's and 1930's in Italy and Germany. Fusion of the State and finance capital. The danger for all of us is that such a state capitalism will devolve into similar sorts of fascist Government.

Such a development is producing buds on its poisonous tree already. It does not require the black shirts of Italy or the German brown shirts, private sector armies and militia funded by fossil fuel-dependent governments already play such a role. However let us be clear, for solely profit-based economics, during the global Covid pandemic, in October 2021, when only 4% of Africa was double-vaccinated compared to the situation in advanced capitalist countries, that was not a mistake or some horrible failure for which someone's head should role. It was systemic.

The choice may become stark: A barbaric fascism where the privileges of a minority are protected, or a participatory-democratic, independent and cooperative Australia with an ecologically regulated mixed economy containing a strengthening social sector, networked across all countries.

The latter model is achievable, must be achievable, as we face death to millions through eco-destruction. We must start towards that participatory democratic model now if we are to avoid catastrophe. How do we start?

Arizmendi and his comrades faced a fascist government every day. Their answer was to build distributed ownership into the fabric of life, into every means for creating solutions to every

need, and not to focus *only* on the anti-fascist struggle. They got away with it. Many others elsewhere did not, but more on that later.

Right now in Victoria, Australia, Earthworkers are working to establish cooperative manufactories and other cooperatives, joining with local councils, faith-based communities and neighbourhood organisations. These *union-supported cooperatives* will manufacture more and more of the green technologies for Australia.

Under this plan ultimately union members are eligible to be equal owners in the cooperatives. New green manufacturing and other cooperative jobs. Collectivising purchase from the cooperatives using our membership of our union-and-community energy retailer, *Cooperative Power Australia (CPA)*, paying for our cooperatively made green goods and services on our energy bill.

As we scale that out, union members, Superannuation/Pension Funds, Local/Regional Governments, and labour movements around the world, in partnership, can build a sector which produces cooperatively and socially, to answer social need.

The imperative governing all other social needs right now is to build an economics which can begin to strengthen the life supports of the Earth System.

We can provide the new green-collar jobs in the new green industries for our young people. Similarly, **we** can deal with youth homelessness and lack of housing for women survivors, because we can build that housing. That needed housing can be socially constructed and should be socially owned.

We can fashion production, distribution and exchange into a healing balm applied to the wounds carried by our world.

A social sector based on green-collar jobs will grow in support across Australia's labour movement, faith-based communities, the environment and other social movements, because a social sector has a vested interest in jobs **and** environment. In a social sector we are clear that now we must **work** our way out of the climate emergency.

Drawing on traditions as diverse as the monastic communal traditions such as those of the Benedictines during the Middle Ages, indigenous communal ownership, work and distribution models, democratic and socialist models, and the modern era Catholic and other religious traditions' cooperative models such as Mondragon, we use that which works and reject that which doesn't.

Private capital, in its drive to reduce the cost of labour and hence increase profit, will continue to export Australian jobs and to externalise their environmental responsibility to developing nations. It will continue to import manufactured goods, deliberately acting in denial of the fact that we will eventually, and always, pay the full environmental cost.

This is far worse than the deliberate campaigns run by capital over the effects of Asbestos and cigarette smoking.

In fact the environmental crisis will force capitalism to further reduce the cost of things over which they have control, such as labour. The pressure on them to move wealth creation, i.e. manufacturing, to the depressed labour economies, will increase. The consequences for politics such as Trumpism, and the rise of political parties in Australia like One Nation and

United Australia Party, are obvious.

The only wholistic alternative combining jobs, environment, affordability and social justice rests in a cooperative model.

The IPCC reports show we have little time in which to act if we and the bulk of other species are to survive. Ideal solutions involving a deepening, participatory democracy within a mixed economy which has a massive social sector owned and controlled by cooperatives and mutuals, must be actively worked towards.

However the Earthworker project accepts that we do not any longer have the time available to us to rely solely on *our* preferred options.

In order to survive there are some immediate policies which need to be adopted by Government. These involve trying to build back into the Australian economy some of the capacity which we tried to defend from the late 1970's through the '80's and 90's until now. The conditions which gave rise to Earthworker when it was founded, from 1997, saw its founders engaged in struggles to stop or push back privatisations, casualisation, sham contracting and the offshoring of industries and jobs.

Unfortunately those undemocratic policies were achieved by capitalism. That means that a range of measures which begin to redress the wrongs of the past need to be taken, but they must be subject to planning.

Massive action by Governments to intervene in the economy, regulating and investing is rational and achievable. Supported by cooperatives and mutuals through distributed-ownership of the jobs and the plant and equipment, so that Governments do not need to employ and do not need to own, is rational and achievable.

The sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, issued in August 2021 has declared a "*Code red for humanity.*" The UN Secretary General Guttierrez underlined the harsh scientific fact, two weeks out from COP 26 in Glasgow November 2021, that with current commitments we are on track for *a 2.7 degree rise in global temperatures.*

How would Arizmendi respond? What would he do?

No doubt he would have studied this imperative acting upon the planet and all of the interconnected species on it. He would be guided by science and by his theory base to develop a plan of action. That theory base is gospel-based for Arizmendi:

Matthew 6:24: *"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."*

The slogan "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs" has biblical origins too. Acts 11:29 states: *"Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea."* The phrase "To each according to his needs" also has a biblical basis in Acts 4:35, stating that *the wealth should go "to the emissaries to distribute to each according to their need"*.

“All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ... Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. ... There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.”¹ Acts 2:44–45, Acts 4:32–35.

Here is outlined, simply and directly, the Gospel-based, theoretical underpinnings of the Catholic and other Christian practice of Distributism, the democratic economics of cooperatives and mutuals.



COOPERATIVE THEORY: INTERCONNECTION UNDERPINS COOPERATION AND SOLIDARITY

Nothing which we fabricate, physical or social, is made by an individual when we look across the whole cycle of its creation, and it always starts with Nature.

All fabrication is social and everything before and after the fabrication process is interconnected. When we fabricate we shift the ways in which everything is interconnected.

Justice is where, when we shift the ways in which we interconnect, we are mindful that we are fabricating our natural and social world. We should do that according to values which emanate from our interconnectivity. Injustice, such as manufacturing industries based upon weapons sales, or production which risks the very Earth System we are part of, is where we are in denial of our interconnection.

A lack of awareness of our relationship as an integral part of nature, added to the powerlessness felt by those who work to correct the damage we have done to both the natural and fabricated environment, demands quick, honest consciousness-raising followed by bold action.

*However, movements can institutionalise if they become dependent for their existence upon the problems which caused them to organise in the first place, remaining in place. Even cooperatives, where we become **totally** dependent upon sales and services into the capitalist Market, can begin to pull on a leash to which we tethered ourselves.*

Especially now, as we look squarely at the demise of the life supports of the Earth System, we need to lead from the front:

Distributed energy and de-growth through distributed ownership.

Cooperatives linking through peak bodies to enable economic planning is required because we cannot merely shift the source of generated power while ignoring all of the other ways in which our economics is depleting habitat. Destroying our lands and forests, rivers and oceans and creating war as the motor of the global economy are central to capitalism. So, the question is, to repeat it: *“What will a different economics look like?”*

The answer must include the conclusions reached by Arizmendi and his comrades as they faced the fascist crisis, because it worked! Until we supply the means for people to step into democratic ownership we cannot begin to act like the Guardians and Stewards of the Earth System which evolution has equipped us to be.

Is the slow movement of a cooperative economy into primacy due to failures within Cooperativism?

Is it the result of flaws in particular personalities or leaders at the head of cooperatives or social movements or their affiliate organisations?

The Earthworker Project argues that the problem is systemic. Once systemic approaches, norms, custom and practice are established then, of course, particular personality types with particular backgrounds, factional alliances and personal relationships can rise through the ranks, in the life of any organisation. It is noteworthy that then often similar types, with powerful ego-based behaviours can “rise to the top”.

Any experienced activist will have witnessed how the institutional framework governing the work of an organisation can be used to “achieve” the rise of the wilfully uncooperative.

Arizmendi again could have been describing this particular dilemma today, when he stated:

“Just as capitalism’s least appealing feature has come to be the trafficking and gambling of capitalists without capital, so we must recognize that, in the eyes of others, the most intolerable aspect of cooperativism may be the presence of cooperativists without solidarity or objective communitarianism.”

Haven’t many of us experienced the problem of becoming focussed too strongly upon the internal life of an organisation, mistaking that for the real world? A cooperative, a group of cooperatives, or a particular union which we work within, the social movements we live within and the religious and spiritual communities of which we may be members of?

After the Covid pandemic becomes more manageable Earthworker Cooperative will be trying to restructure our organisations for engagement, to educate for engagement and to renew the organisational lifeblood through constant engagement. If we are not engaging in solidarity then experience teaches us that whole worlds of busy lives, policy developments and

planning occurs, which we can mistake for the real world, but which offer few solutions to real-world problems.

This deeply factional, illusory world is a highly contested terrain. That adds to the appearance that it is real. Absorption into the power plays and factional life inside social movements, unions, political parties, cooperatives and families, where the organisations do not exist to engage, can see the political life of the organisation itself actually obstruct change in addressing the issues they were established to address.

Earthworker Cooperative has a longer term organisational aspiration based upon the experience of the New South Wales branch of the Builders Labourers Federation, a union where in the early 1970's they instituted limited tenure of office, where elected representatives could not serve more than two terms before going back to the job. They also introduced rotation of positions throughout the organisation with policy decisions to be made at mass meetings.

Given strong cooperative work places with strong surpluses, we aim to put the sort of training in place which can see people able to work across a number of roles and functions within the whole structure of Earthworker Cooperative. With an appropriate skill base we believe it is possible to de-link long-termism from elected positions.

There is enormous potential in our communities. There are powerful transformative qualities in our communities. But without cooperatives these qualities have no economic expression.

Since the anti-Vietnam war activism of the 1960's the transformative qualities of our communities have largely channelled into protest. Protest is an important part of these transformative qualities but the fact is we will not protest our way out of what lies ahead. Nor will we protest a new world into existence. The time has already past where we must move beyond protest towards the new social structures of community ownership and democratic control of a strong social sector of the economy.

Decisions are made in economies and are carried out in our parliaments.

It is urgent now that people see an economic democracy at work. Especially given the history of the twentieth century. This must happen before people can feel safe to commit to a philosophy which provides a set of solutions today, to assist us build an economics of sustainability and peace tomorrow.

A LITTLE MORE ABOUT EARTHWORKER COOPERATIVE

Earthworker Cooperative rose around 25 years ago. We are driven by the need to create alternative jobs and directions away from the carbon-dependent and ecologically destructive industries in Australia and around the world. We formed in order to place our union movement, united with environment scientists and the environment and other social movements, at the head of a new, exciting direction.

Over the intervening years many have become clear that reliance on fossil fuels and other products and industrial practices needed to end if our planet is to survive. However not many were clear on what we could replace *the jobs involved in the big four planet-destroying industries in Australia* - fossil fuels, petrochemicals, plastics and military - with.

As unionist-cooperators such a lack of clarity was a position we were never permitted to maintain for very long, while at the same time we were forced to accept that we do have a greater responsibility to *insure* that the alternatives are actually created and built!

That is so, if for no other reason than the involvement of our fellow workers in work leading to problematic outcomes, and importantly, because the union movement is still the largest civil society organisation in Australia.

That is why we are cooperatives of unionists. It is also true to say that all the environmentalists we knew were in their union and the unionism which we had dedicated our lives to was entirely green.



In fact one of the foundation stones of Earthworker Cooperative was the experience, for some of us who are now elders, in the Green Bans. This union movement in Australia, led by the Builders Labourers Federation, especially in the State of New South Wales (NSW), saw the question of economic democracy squarely put in the 1970's.

For a Green Ban to be applied Builders Labourers would vote on whether we would agree to destroy inner urban, low income housing or vital parkland. In some instances the rank and file voted to take industrial action against developers and builders who were destroying old growth forests in order to save those forests.

Some of the bans were socially and culturally important: When a gay academic was sacked at a University, builders labourers and other building workers on the job downed tools and walked off until he was reinstated. In the early 1970's that was ground-breaking! Bans were placed to win the continued existence of small businesses that would have otherwise been thrown out of their premises when the towers went up.

Bans were placed to insure First Nations families had access to community based housing in the inner urban areas. The beginnings of what we call now practical Treaty work. This is important because for the first time in history a movement referring to the environment included both environment and social justice, fused within a framework of economic democracy, as they actually are, of course, in the real world.

We must note also that the NSW BLF for a short time achieved democratic control over employment where the unionists determined an orderly uptake of workers on a "first on last off principle" so that when your name came up on the list you got the job. This also protected against blacklisting.



Further and even more significantly, the Opera House was built under workers' control for the last two years of its construction. The employers were behind on budget and time. The workers elected their own middle managers, determined the work plan, got the job in on time and on budget, while giving themselves a 35 hour week and a wage increase! Cooperation works!

This is important in so many ways, but in one way in particular that will benefit the global responses to the three-way crisis: As the

social sector of the economy develops out, it is also possible for workers' democracy to spread to the job and industry level *within* the private sector. Especially now where so much investment capital is workers' capital in the form of Superannuation/Pension Funds.

Ultimately, during the 1970's there was \$3000 million tied up in Green Bans. That's a lot of money now, but in the early '70's that was a future-determining amount for a small nation! Gangsters and a corrupted NSW police force were set upon the BLF. People were kidnapped and bashed. Some were murdered in the attempt to break the union.



BLF Organiser arrested defending a Green Ban

Eventually it was divisions within the union movement itself which eventually led to the outlawing of the NSW Branch of the BLF.

That provides such an important lesson for the dual *union and cooperative movement* of working people globally: The absolute desperate need for unity of purpose in achieving the economic democracy and not over-arching agreement; and with the addition of what Arizmendi did so well, a disciplined *effort* to maintain the person at the heart of the collective's work.

Although Green Bans still do exist in Australia it is only with the rise of the Earthworker Cooperative that we see a systemic alternative involving workers' economic democracy as one solution to what we now call the three way crisis, re-established. (Please see our Arizmendi Blog, www.arizmendigathering.blog to see the animated story of the Green Bans experience in Victoria, and the book **Green Bans Red Unions** by Meredith and Verity Burgmann for the bigger picture of this inspirational story. Also **Taming the Concrete Jungle**, Pete Thomas 1973 – Pete's book should be reprinted!).

In Australia, and through building powerful alliances globally, we want to increase the power of the global cooperative and union movement. That combined power is crucial if we are to deal in the very practical ways required, with building a jobs-based, community-building alternative to climate emergency, species extinction and the growing, global, war economy.



The decades-long attacks upon the Australian union movement, which came hot on the heels of the attacks on the BLF, has meant a relatively slow (only 25 years!) uptake of this new direction. But Earthworker Cooperative now has the first cooperative manufactory in Morwell, Victoria, in the heart of the coal region. The name of the cooperative is ***Earthworker Energy Manufacturing Cooperative (EEMC)***, and thanks to the efforts of a determined and inspirational team at the manufactory, although small, it is shovel-ready, slowly picking up work in its own right.

In fact, our cooperative manufactory EEMC has finally picked up what for us is a major contract to produce our solar hot water systems for a cooperative housing organisation in Victoria. This work is helping kickstart what will be years of amazing development for the whole Earthworker ecosystem of cooperatives.

We are entirely fixed upon rebuilding manufacturing in Australia, working with the support and encouragement of the ***Australian Manufacturing Workers Union*** in Victoria. We are now, and will develop further in the future a manufacturing capacity to make the new green technologies which our people and the planet need, as part of a just transition, and especially in our carbon-dependent *country regions that produce our coal and timber, where a lot of the manufacturing must be put if the transition is to be real.*

- Above, our solar hot water stainless steel tank with a 15 year warranty.
- Our battery storage Trailer for Farms, Tradies and Local Governments
- An example of the 1.4 MWh storage we intend to build. This scales out from the smaller batteries used in the Trailer and households.



Earthworker Cooperative often operates via partnerships to access the best goods, the training our workers might need and a pathway towards mutualisation. We have partnerships involving battery storage, solar farms and building and construction as a means to establish the cooperatives, as part of our own formation.



Another Earthworker Cooperative, *Redgum Cleaning Cooperative*, cannot keep up with the work (although Covid has had a constraining effect as it has upon every organisation), recently interviewing more potential worker-owners into their Earthworker-typical, 100% union workplaces.

Redgum Cooperative is an example of success for us. Success when *sometimes* it does not feel like it! Redgum cannot keep up with the work, but it is a cooperative which continues to teach the rest of us about the difficulties which inevitably arise *when we move from that unnamed cooperation-in-production, which is total, into cooperation-over-production*.

On that terrain of *ownership* can arise centuries-old-prejudices, in all of us, telling all of us that as a species we are not hard-wired for cooperative, democratic, distributed ownership and that, really, democratic ownership and democratic management cannot be done by ordinary people. And it is *into this terrain* where working people are attempting to build a person-centred economic democracy, that *we bring our old practices and ego-based behaviours*.

We are shaped and moved along by the wind currents of history's wars, raids, murders, ongoing violence against women and the young, exploitation of every sort by the powerful of their day in order to gain dominance. We often are not even conscious of shying away from the trust required if we wish to live cooperatively. We are often not equipped with the trust needed because our lives have taught us that trusts will be broken. (Isn't it interesting that when anyone wishes to absolutely protect *monies and property* they place it in a "Trust").

However we must complete the picture.

Cooperation, although it remains unnamed, operates in every human endeavour underpinning every millisecond of productive work and in every individual life. Cooperation occurs in every workplace, regardless of the economic and political framework a country may operate within.

In every economic system, cooperation comes before competition.

Redgum, small but stubborn, has taught us to stare down behaviours which arise from a lack of trust in our own nature, but not in too narrow a sense of one side right and one side wrong. Even when we do not see a clear way forward, to continue to attempt to get the balance right between collective work and individual dignity and integrity. That is the work for all of us over many decades to come. It is the terrain where organisational landslides can see everything we strive to achieve covered in mud, or alternatively the terrain where we plant enough green shoots to stop that mudslide from occurring. Good on you Redgum!



The Hope Cooperative, an Earthworker cooperative for refugees and asylum seekers. Hope is doing inspiring work placing people into training, education at all levels and on into higher education. Hope carries out food distribution and all forms of assistance.

There are now a number of people who have completed their extensive firefighting training and are on active duty. One Hope cooperator now works for the Department of Premier and Cabinet in Victoria, achieving that position through their own effort, skill and of course, with support from their cooperative brothers and sisters.



Some Hope Cooperative members are now also members of Redgum Cooperative and are working as fulltime Cleaner worker-owners!

Earthworkers are very aware that without that principle of cooperatives cooperating with other cooperatives real impacts will diminish. Without a fully systemic structure able to

work across and pull together the various parts of the economy, then we cannot address the systemic economic causes underpinning the three way crisis. So this one inter-cooperative action points towards a crucial methodology.

This is *so* important when we look at addressing the three-way crisis. Where Governments will not address the economics of injustice then our social sector based on cooperatives and mutuals and organised across the globe, can and must.

Next, over the past two years we have built an incredibly significant direction. The four Construction Unions gave Earthworker Cooperative the go ahead to drill down and define what it would look like for our movement to assist unionists to establish an Earthworker Cooperative, called ***Earthworker Smart Energy Cooperative (Earthworker SEC)***, to green up the State of Victoria.

What would be the skills required, which technologies would we best focus upon and importantly, how could we mobilise the Nations' socialised workers' capital, Superannuation (referred to as Pension Funds in some countries), in behind the recommended projects our research would unearth?

The day after the four construction unions ticked-off on the *Earthworker Smart Energy Cooperative Steering Committee's* work, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (Peak body for all Victorian Unions) gave the project it's imprimatur as well.

Arising out of that work the *Earthworker Smart Energy Cooperative Steering Committee* produced a *Final Report* which recommended two key areas for development: *Energy Efficiency and Housing, particularly housing for key workers. Nurses, Teachers, Warehouse and distribution workers, etc. Frontline workers in the war against the Covid pandemic and who will be even more so as the three-way crisis deepens. We will also emphasise that cohort of young working families less and less able to ever get into a home.*

Now the four Construction Unions have agreed with the two key recommendations, freeing up our work to build a new Earthworker Cooperative, *Earthworker Construction Cooperative as one part of Earthworker Smart Energy Cooperative.*



Then as well, on Friday 14th May 2021, the **Victorian Trades Hall Council**, the peak body for all Victorian unions, adopted Earthworker Cooperative and its *Earthworker Smart Energy Cooperative Final Report*. This resulted in Earthworker Cooperative and its *Earthworker Smart Energy Cooperative* becoming, once and for all, a project with full support of the Victorian union movement, representing hundreds of thousands of workers.

We have embarked on the next phase right on the cusp of the Arizmendi Gathering!

As per the two recommendations, in the initial years we are focussing on Energy Efficiency and Housing. We have a team of experts with decades of experience in construction, **Earthworker Elevo**, which will manage our jobs as we train our cooperative worker owners, our tradies and labourers in the ***Earthworker Construction Cooperative*** Training in Project Management and all of the other skills required to run a construction cooperative.





Five percent of every build will be placed into an ***Earthworker Housing Cooperative***.

We envisage a Crawl, Walk and Run stage with Crawl to be a small project between 100 – 200 homes, to establish the structure. Walk will be at around 1000 homes and Run at 2000+. As you can see 5% of every build going into an *Earthworker Housing Cooperative*, over many years, will start to add up. Through **Public Social Partnerships (PSP's)** we can partner with Governments around housing in the future, where Governments do not own and do not employ, but rather co-invest to build the new entirely green, socialised housing stock. (More on PSP's below).

Apart from our cooperative manufactory producing solar hot water systems and household heating, we have partnered with unions and other community organisations to help establish an energy retailer **Cooperative Power Australia (CPA)**. CPA is currently retailing and we want to assist with a drive across Victorian and Australian unions, and across civil society generally, to sign up as many unionists and others as possible to CPA.

A central part of this structure is that CPA is not only providing power, but will also provide the means for Australian unionists, and others, to purchase the green technologies they need *on their energy bill*.

We will provide what Final Report key author Colin Long calls a full spectrum cooperative response:

-  Audit
-  Installation, with as much as we can install being cooperatively and/or Australian made as possible
-  Provision of all the Trades' worker-owners so that the householder does not have to search, *Actual* service of product warranties
-  Provide the financial means for workers to purchase their green upgrade on their Cooperative Power Australia (CPA) energy bill.

On the green housing front, through Earthworker Cooperative alliance-building, *Earthworker Smart Energy Cooperative* has a 7-10 star rated home, made in a Melbourne, Victoria-based factory. Once the slab is poured construction on these factory-built homes is a matter of days to complete. We intend to bring to each project a community and not just an estate, with solar hot water, household heating and shared solar power with battery storage, provided by Earthworker cooperatives.

Over time we will increase both the level of cooperative labour and input, as well as the amount of cooperative-made products, into each project.



Green Housing, Green Jobs in manufacture and construction – This is an example of a Tiny Home model. This is more an emergency model. Others in the range of types will be 2 -4 bedroom homes for union and eventually other families.

SOCIAL SECTOR FAIR TRADE AGREEMENTS

Earthworker Cooperative understands that to deal with the three-way crisis at a scale which actually makes a difference, other measures and policies are needed.

To be successful quickly enough, to impact powerfully enough upon climate emergency, species extinction and capitalism's reliance on the global arms economy, Earthworker is uniting with the labour movement and cooperative communities globally.

We are already building the connections and alliances to build what we call ***Social Sector Fair Trade Agreements (SSFTA's)***.

The links we are forging through the Arizmendi Gathering are already adding to the capacity to scale out over the years ahead into a global project.

Our introductory discussions have included representatives from cooperatives, unions and social movements internationally. We want to have more discussions in more countries around the world. To take the opportunity of meeting under Arizmendi's name, around Arizmendi's values, to begin what will be many years of work.

As soon as we are happy that our first factory is *fully* viable, we will begin in earnest to trade our respective cooperatives into each other's hands, with working people around the world. Building in the protections and transparency, the skills transfers, the reciprocal processes as part the sort of community joint venturing we need, in order to work on a scale necessary to impact strongly.

In Argentina we have initiated discussions with a longstanding cooperative enterprise, so that we will be ready, under appropriate conditions, for their cooperative manufactory to come here under Australian workers' ownership and Earthworker Energy Manufacturing Workers Cooperative to go there under Argentinian workers' ownership.





It is demonstrable that people from all countries around the world will unite around economic structures which prove and inspire democratic ownership, and through that, provide an appropriate set of means as we all, *truly*, begin to engage in the climate wars.

PUBLIC SOCIAL PARTNERSHIPS

Earthworker Cooperative wishes to partner with Governments, here and around the world, using what we call ***Public Social Partnerships (PSP's)***, as *distinct from Public Private Partnerships (PPP's)*. Partnering with the social sector through *PSP's* will create a new role for Governments within the economy.

Where Governments do not wish to own, we the people can do that through our cooperatives. Where Governments don't wish to employ, worker-owners can collectively own and control our own labour.

In a *PSP* however, Governments can assist:

-  Administration of major projects – Earthworker will project manage and answer to relevant Government Departments
-  Accountability and transparency – ***Absolutely no commercial in confidence!***
-  Establish an appropriate legislative framework in which cooperatives can flourish
-  Act as an honest broker here and around the world in setting up SSFTA's.

SUPERANNUATION/PENSION FUNDS (Superannuation is Community Capital- *The promise of Economic Democracy*, Dan Musil and Dave Kerin, October 2020)



Superannuation was won through the actions of Australian unions over many years.

Superannuation is the workers' wage. It started when workers agreed to set aside a wage increase of 3% and has grown from there. The "compulsory Employer Contribution" referred to is misleading. It is not as the phrase suggests somehow paid on top of our wage. Rather it is a compulsory administrative duty, which employers must afford every worker in their employ, to *contribute a percentage of the worker's wage into the worker's preferred Fund*.

Yet, when you ask fellow workers, the majority will tell you that the employers themselves are contributing money to us, de-linked from the sale of our labour to them. This is because *all parties* continue to use the phrase "Employer Contribution!" As a result, employers continue to sit on the Boards of our Superannuation Funds and continue to refer to it as private capital.

Today Australia's superannuation funds hold assets headed towards \$4 trillion (ABS, 2020). As major investors in Australian company shares, over the next 20 years Super funds are on track to dominate domestic shareholdings, with collective ownership of up to 60 per cent of shares in the Australian Securities Exchange (Deloitte, 2019). Australian industry funds regularly invest in overseas assets, unable to find sufficient 'suitable' opportunities in Australia.

Australia has the fourth largest Superannuation pool in the world.

The wealth in our superannuation funds is big, and is playing an increasingly critical role in modern economies, by controlling the majority of Australia's investment capital. Yet this fact remains largely unknown in Australia.

When people speak of 'Public Private Partnerships', for instance to fund public infrastructure, superannuation investment is referred to as 'private capital' – as if it's somehow someone else's money.

If democratic collectives, such as a proposed Superannuation Cooperative, do not reclaim our rightful ownership of it, there's a growing risk it will be used to fund our accelerating demise,

rather than the futures we want and deserve. Just look at the recent fervour over Australia's 'economic opportunities' in militarist manufacturing – in profiting from, and becoming dependent on, the global war machine.

From exPrime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's meeting with American Governors and Trump in 2018, to the Morrison Government's shameless enthusiasm for military production as part of his new 2021 \$1.5 Billion 'manufacturing plan', it seems investment into Public Private Partnerships in the military industries is now an alive threat to our socialised capital, Superannuation.



The Age Newspaper 28/10/2021 informed us that the English Government is arguing strongly for Australian Superannuation investment into their plans for more nuclear. Nuclear is not an alternative to climate emergency because it imposes another front on which the Earth System has to rise or fall based upon the outcomes of the capitalists' gambling habit. At this close to midnight we need to "Leave it in the ground!"

And all of this is occurring at a time when the risk of global conflict continues to escalate.

Much of the drive towards war in the modern world is now less about capturing territory or resources. Or illegitimate regime change in The People's Republic of China. It has for some decades now been more about the size of the market in militarism which is driving us from one war to another.

We must eliminate the incentives which, once they are dressed in the language of 'Defence', "Rights", "Freedom" "Liberation", threaten war on our world and our very survival.

Earthworker Cooperative believes the vast majority of people on our planet will support a rational removal of the private sector out of arms trade. A first but very important step. We would like to see the UN General Assembly vote to enforce a rapid move to

"Legislate profit out of the arms industry."



EOS Remote Weapons System for export. We are surely better than this!

The prospect is bleak but not impossible! Although we run the risk that our young people once again will be placed in harm's way, while other peaceful roads are not taken. People are more sceptical after the Iraq war. Building a campaign to counter the drift of our Superannuation investment into the War Economy, right when the climate crisis demands action, is possible. It has taken years to campaign for the first Super funds to withdraw from fossil fuels. Just as we begin to see change there, we can and must stop investment of our Super

Funds, our workers' capital, into the arms economy.

However divestment is only the "No!" What is the "Yes!" What are we doing, as distinct from what others may or may not be doing, must provide the alternatives in the places where we work and where we live into which our Super/Pension Funds can invest.

At the time of its introduction, internal debates within the union movement sought for Superannuation to be used to build workers' housing, in line with the concept of a social wage. It is the appropriate time to put the question of how our Super is used back on the agenda.




Jobs to make, build and service green housing stock here and, through cooperation, around the world, is a good start. Shelter, food, education, health and transport worked on collectively through a network of cooperatives, which *cooperate a new system into life*. That is one massive chunk in the "Yes!" we need.

Superannuation is our money. It results from collective labour. For most of its life it sits in a number of collective funds. Its use must be for the collective good, part of which, in the era of climate emergency and economic collapse, is surely to link wealth-creating manufacturing and other jobs to environmental outcomes.

We must determine the use to which our capital is put. We must build the public forum which enables debate about how appropriate collective decision-making might occur.

Questions around definitions must be addressed because the narrow criteria which "govern" the rules for investment currently, things like 'member benefit' and 'return on investment' are literally killing us.





New definitions around Superannuation must include criteria which provide for:

-  A collective ability to insure our Superannuation investments are used to create a safe climate on a liveable planet
-  The climate jobs required to achieve that, at the same time as providing
-  Lifelong accommodation and care up to and through peoples' retirement.

As we speed towards a \$4 Trillion Superannuation pool, that is doable.

It is time to mobilise our Industry Super Funds behind our members' needs. Establishing democratic controls over social wealth such as Super, is surely one of the most urgent industrial issues confronting our union movement and indeed, all nations?

Investment of our social capital solely into corporate interests, which often run counter to Australian and global needs, is no longer viable. We own the wealth. It about time we partnered that wealth globally towards economic democracy in cooperatives, which begin to create the socially necessary goods that are needed in:

-  The new green energy grid
-  The new green transport grid
-  The new green rivers and oceans grid
-  The new green landcare grid

Making what we need where we stand. Partnering in new ways to insure that, through PSP's and SSFTA's we begin to repurpose the tools of war into strengthening the life supports of the Earth System.

This is the role for social sector economics based on cooperatives and mutuals within an economic democracy.

WHAT IS THE KEY BLOCKER?

A social sector, based upon cooperatives and mutuals, benefits from transparency. Unlike economies which are largely dominated by the Private Sector where the interests of the powerful are often made invisible and thereby protected.

Thus we see undemocratic measures such as Commercial in Confidence, or the constraints and lack of responsiveness caused by "Free" Trade restrictions, or the secrecy inherent in the military/defense industry contracts, result in shareholders now with more rights than citizens.






While it is all very well to raise a critique of what *is*, it is important that we understand that the conditions which make up what *is* currently, are the conditions which stamp the new conditions we *wish* to create. To that extent, like Arizmendi, we need to look first at the ways in which we meet our needs, the political economy, then determine how we might meet those needs in ways more appropriate to people and planet.

Private marketeers struggle with the idea of an economics which actively works to strengthen the life supports of the Earth System. The "debate" in Australia over coal and timber, over the Great Barrier Reef and the abuse of waterways and oceans is evidence of that. Systemically, capitalism is shackled to a very narrow understanding of value and profit, where we are not an organic part of the Earth System in which we live and which lives in us. Rather, for them, the Earth System is merely a provider of resources into the productive process.

Of course we are witness to private capitalists attempting to set up a for-profit relationship in areas of alternative energy, transport, water and its use, and manufacture of alternative and organic products. However these are disjointed and disconnected and meant to be in competition with each other, not a systemically designed, alternative which allows for *democratic planning*.

In order that these, environmentally more aware, private capitalists profit, under their plan, we will still have to buy *more*, consume *more*. Capitalists and their political representatives describe all attempts at planning which include planning to consume only what we need, as undemocratic, inevitably leading to totalitarianism.

Even well-meaning capitalist environmentalists must continue to operate within a systemic approach which relies upon:

-  Permanent growth in levels of consumption (just that the products may be less damaging to some parts of "the environment")
-  Irrational product development, sometimes for no real reasons other than product differentiation and to sell the next version
-  Externalisation of costs where the true price of stuff is never paid by them, but rather by ordinary people and the planet
-  Continuing to shrink the resource base of the Planet
-  Continuing to eliminate habitat, eliminating pollinators and other species who work next to us, and creating conditions for the rise of pandemics of zoonotic diseases like Covid 19.

To frame things in yet another way: In a social sector profit occurs when we distribute according to need. This is true inside the cooperative and between cooperatives, as we pay a percentage of our surpluses into our peak body for distribution. Surplus is not profit. ***Capitalists and their shareholders profit in their use of the surplus, that is, for themselves. In our social sector we profit by distributing the surplus for the common good.***

BUT, IT IS TIME TO HONOUR THE ONGOING ATTEMPTS BY THE MANY

Did Arizmendi and Mondragon get something right which others, for whatever reason, failed to realise?

So many thousands have tried to establish a *system of cooperatives* that would satisfy need, while maintaining personal dignity at the heart of the economic and financial structures they established. Connected to workers' unions and peace. So many attempted to build a social sector of their Country's economy, based upon cooperatives and mutuals within an economic democracy.

CREED

**....I don't know if I believe
in the forgiveness of all sin
but, yes, I believe in the resurrection
of the death squads
of the oppressed
in the religion of the people
in the power of the people
world without end
Amen**

**- By the Nicaraguan-Salvadoran
poet Claribel Alegria translated
by Julia Mayer Orozco**

So many times imperial armies have been set upon the cooperators.

From El Salvador to Palestine. Back through Republican Spain on up into interventions against Guatemala's Arbenz and Chile's Allende.

From the US supported Death Squads in Honduras, where *cooperatives were established by the colonisers*, United Fruit Company and Standard Fruit Company, to cover the phoney arrangements they put in place around return of the massive amounts of land they "owned". They went on to make even bigger profits, using the cooperatives as the means to externalise their costs.
(Nov-Dec 1981 *nacla report on the Americas*).

In El Salvador throughout 1980's the decisive tasks outlined in the objectives of the democratic revolutionary government stated in Point 5 - "To transfer to the people, through nationalisations and the creation of collective and socialised enterprises: the fundamental means of production and distribution that are now hoarded by the oligarchy and the USA monopolies, the land held in the power of the big landlords, the enterprises that produce and distribute electricity and other monopolised services, foreign trade, banking, and large transportation enterprises. None of this will affect small or medium-sized private businesses, which will be given every kind of stimulus and support in the various branches of the national economy." This policy was a culmination of decades of struggle, murdered by the death squads along with the disappeared.
(July August 1980 *nacla report on the Americas*.)

The majority of people in El Salvador were clear. They sought a socialised economy. The response from the US imperial power and their Salvadorean backers in the local elite was a violent, bitter, prolonged war against the people.

There are so many other examples. We urge you to look at the role of ITT and the American CIA in overthrowing the democratically elected Allende Government of Chile. Chile, where after the capitalist coup the first experiment at scale of the neoliberal roll out occurred: Secondary Boycott or anti-solidarity laws to shackle unions, privatisation, arms-length employment contracts, casualisation, and sham contracting.

This all started with the fascist Pinochet declaring martial law, then was maintained after



President Allende's last hours: Defending his People

martial law ceased, with an iron fist. Neoliberalism was born under the heel of Pinochet's fascism.

For our purposes it is important to reiterate that Arizmendi and his fellow Cooperators did their work to establish Mondragon *despite* the fascist government in Spain.

In the Americas and around the world we see cooperatives playing a decisive role in the lives of the millions of the dispossessed, *mostly* as part of the solution sometimes as part of the problem.

The same can of course be said of that other great institution of the global working people, unions.

These cooperators and unionists did not fail. They were militarily, but clearly only temporarily, halted on their march. We continue to witness what happens when people seek *to go from mere cooperation in the economy towards cooperation over the economy, across the whole spectrum of countries mentioned above.*

My point is that people can only respond to the conditions they find themselves in and not some preferred set of circumstances. People in countries around the world who have tried and continue to try to achieve what Mondragon has achieved, have often earned the fury of the powerful. In their pursuit of wealth and power, their search for *being* in the dead end road of *having*.

And of course it is that pursuit which has seen the production of the climate emergency, species extinction and an economic dependency on militarism.

So an ongoing investigation for all of us, and a very necessary, healthy debate concerns the question:

“Why did Franco’s fascist regime allow Mondragon to happen while elsewhere around the world capitalists and their political representatives organised to crush similar attempts?”

There are so many factors involved in answering this question, only some of which we can discern from the outside. We are keen to hear from the various Basque viewpoints over the

years ahead, and that through the Arizmendi Gatherings set for 29th November each year, we can listen and learn.

However, to begin the discussion may I venture a few ideas from a distance:

- 🍷 The fascists knew they would meet a granite wall of resistance in the Basque Countries, lasting decades, with no guarantee of victory
- 🍷 Mondragon Cooperatives were not in a position where they needed to/sort to expropriate lands, factories and offices. Because of that Mondragon did not set up a revolutionary Government in opposition to any other Government
- 🍷 Arizmendi was not connected to cold war enemies of Franco and global capitalism, such as communists, socialists or anarchists (even where it is reasonable to assume, given the structures put in place in Mondragon, Arizmendi was influenced by the anarcho-syndicalist movement in pre-war Spain)
- 🍷 Arizmendi and his comrades established cooperatives which met the needs of local people, while slowly and simultaneously they began to sell into a post-World War 2 market in a Europe starved of basic commodities. Such as their famous manufactured household goods
- 🍷 Franco, desperate after the war to be accepted back into the global community and worried about being left out of the new global arrangements involving the US and the Soviet Union, did not see a need to block the developments in Mondragon.

These ideas are challengeable, of course, because they are deductions drawn by someone outside the conditions and characteristics which existed in the Basque Countries after the war. That is why we look forward to learning and understanding more about this time in Basque and global history, as it continues to raise relevant questions concerning the spread of economic democracy around the world today.

SOME QUESTIONS WHICH ARISE NATURALLY

Marx pointed out that the end point in the cycle of alienation is alienation from the self (Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844). That is the inability to become and remain interconnected.

When we observe behaviours, even in social movements, unions and large or small organisations working for change, we notice that this is not always imposed upon us by external, aggressive purveyors of class, hierarchy, caste, gender inequity or deniers of human freedom.

The alienated life, bereft of compassionate engagement, may sometimes arise more *indirectly* in a culture when the powerlessness which we experience within the hierarchies of modern life have been internalised, become “normal”. For instance, internalisation of the effects of colonial and/or class domination which may have occurred over a long period of time, or the centuries of indignity and disrespect suffered by people of colour or gays and lesbians. It is demonstrable that sometimes people will “push down to stand up” and more so when right wing Governments reward such behaviours.

However, it is also observable that a constant struggle goes on in us between lessons which arise out of our interconnection, versus lessons which appear to confirm that fulfilment lies in separation. The experience of solidarity and its economic expression cooperation *versus* experiences which impact upon us as separation and loss.

The obvious extreme ideological expression of the latter being fascism, the *very* environment in which Arizmendi and Mondragon rose in a resurrection of the human spirit, not only after but simultaneous with Franco's attempt to crush it.

Ever practical Arizmendi puts it succinctly: *"First people then cooperatives"*.

In other words at the heart of the collective activity was the person, and that we need a path to "Formation," a path involving the disciplined *practice* of cooperation done until we *become* cooperators.

The irony is that as capitalists make profit through buying and selling human work at the least cost to themselves, as they deplete other species, and the planet's resources in the process, what they themselves are ultimately searching for is that very sense of fulfilment which is only possible in interconnection. In a *life lived* in awareness of a dynamic interconnection of all existence.

All of the human wisdom traditions teach of people who appear to 'have it all' yet upon reflection state it is not enough, and that such a life has not worked in creating circumstances where we can deal more appropriately with life's dissatisfactions and anxieties. There are many parables and stories from across all of the compassionate and progressive spiritual, religious and political traditions and lineages which deal with this, because it is substantive to the notion that love, hard-fought with sometimes painful consequences, is who we truly are.

Certainly those texts and readings which we know influenced Arizmendi's formative years are very clear. From Micah 6:8:

"The Lord asks this of you and only this: Act justly, love tenderly, walk humbly with your God."

Through to Matthew 23:8, "But do not let yourselves be called Master because you have only one Master, and all of you are family."

Or the beautiful poetry of Isaiah 58:6-8, where even we rusted on old reds are pushed to stand when we hear it:

"....to loose the bonds of injustice and undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke....Then your light shall break forth like the dawn and your healing shall spring up quickly...."

Again in Isaiah 58:9 we hear from, what **Fr Bob Maguire** in Australia calls 'the God with no name and the Church with no borders':

"Then you shall call and the LORD (Yahweh) will answer, you shall cry for help and he will say: Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness, and your gloom be like the noonday."

We can conclude that Arizmendi, based upon the way he lived, and the still-living outcomes he established, believed we cannot separate need from who we are. That who we perceive ourselves to be is bound up with the ways in which we meet our needs. That we cannot meet our needs or the needs of others through unjust economic means. We therefore cannot

separate our development as human beings from political economy, and the great, liberating, profound and hopeful truth that *we become what we do*.

We know through scientific studies that the environment surrounding us is not a bunch of disconnected resources separate from ourselves, there only for exploitation by us in order to produce goods for a market. Rather the environment is who we are.

In his 2016 book *“Facing the Anthropocene,”* Ian Angus points to the work of Will Steffen and other Australian and international scientists who began to refer to an **Earth System** from round 1986 when they established the **International Geosphere-Biosphere Program (IGBP)**. Ian’s definitions defining the Earth System on page 31 of his book conclude with this:

“Human beings, their societies and their activities are an integral component of the Earth System, and are not an outside force perturbing an otherwise natural system. There are many modes of natural variability and instabilities within the System as well as anthropologically driven changes. By definition, both types of variability are part of the dynamics of the Earth System. They are often impossible to separate completely and they interact in complex and sometimes mutually reinforcing ways.”

The environment is something we do every second, breathing and moving, working and through the use of our senses, caring and loving and importantly, the role that we share with some other species:

We can choose to bring conscious awareness to the interconnection of all life even in our economic activity.

We continuously co-evolve as part of our environment through our constant, unstoppable interactions, with every-thing.

We co-experience what is, with every-thing in the world. Via our entire organism, just as we experience this paper, or computer, when we read it. Consciousness is existence acting upon itself and is a function of interconnectivity. We can observe that consciousness is entirely collective and cooperative, as indeed is the coming into existence of this paper or computer, when we investigate the thousands of cooperative interactions which occurred to make the paper and the computer which you now read from.

When we act to meet our needs within and as part of the environment, bringing our awareness to the collective way in which we produce, then we lay the basis for a committed life.

There is, because of the two-way nature of awareness, a relationship between our awareness of the world and the world’s awareness of us, and therefore the potential for fulfilment.

To connect, in a very practical way, jobs and environment in a community-owned social sector of the economy, built upon cooperatives and mutuals, is democratic in both the ends we are trying to achieve and the means we use to achieve them. Hence, that sort of connection is one fulfilment of a democratic praxis within the economy.

This is why an ecosystemic approach to cooperative building is so very important to Earthworker Cooperative. Building a good cooperative is wonderful work, however, *even good work can get in the way*.

The scale and intensity of the crisis facing humankind right now means that every bit of good work we do must be conducted using 360° vision, or we are blind. In other words, each cooperative needs to foster and strengthen the work of every other cooperative in order to work with the Earth System.

‘People and communities, just like flowers and other species of beings, survive and triumph in groups, not in isolation.’

**Arizmendi on
“Human Foundation”**

It is a waste and dangerous now for us to place our life’s energy into the development of disconnected cooperatives. An isolated cooperative, which might come together with other cooperatives for discussion at conferences but which in its economic life depends more upon the features and characteristics of the private capitalist market to sell into, is a distraction.

The isolated cooperative duplicates many of the internal processes of other isolated cooperatives, it




wastes time and resources in doing so. We cannot build critical mass around the isolated cooperative here, and more importantly internationally. Neither critical mass in our physical development nor critical mass in gathering global workers’ capital.

The isolated cooperative can be beautiful. However we know beauty, in its narrow, socially created, market driven sense cannot be the basis for relationships in a world where that idea of beauty is unsustainable. However beauty taken as the whole process of coming into being, blossoming, ageing and decaying, that is, the beauty we see as the whole-of-life process, sees no separation between the flower, the “weed” the person, the sun, rain, wind and moonlight. The truly beautiful planning which nature has devised is sustainable because it accepts formally what is always there hidden, interconnection.

Similarly cooperation can only make a difference, and is only sustainable when it continually extends into all those spaces where cooperation occurs and surrounds it with an organisational framework which can order and plan that cooperation. In other words because of its lack of a planning network, it’s tendency to inhibit subsidiarity due to its lack of scale and spread, the isolated cooperative undermines people’s confidence in the ability of cooperatives and mutuals to assist, in a primary way, in resolving the three way crisis.

We cannot develop the scale of organisation required, as we face the three way crisis, if we cannot put coordinated, democratic planning into action through ***a federal system of cooperatives pushing ahead with a revolutionary determination.***

Our immediate tasks involve:

-  Determining what needs to be done economically to strengthen the life supports of the Earth System?
-  Building a global Earthworker Project which builds the networks we need in order to achieve what needs to be done?
-  How we provide the resources required by our cooperatives in our own countries and internationally, in order to achieve victory?

Arizmendi taught that a realignment of ourselves within the whole, *a formation of the person*, where cooperative work becomes fulfilling, occurs because the outcomes meet real needs which are truly social and, therefore, authentically personal.

For all of us as cooperators facing the three way crisis, human need links us through work to economic democracy and environmental sustainability. And when it does, it affirms Arizmendi's Gospel-based understanding that we *become* these new and engaged things that we do. Formation! We also begin to achieve what Marx said was the resolution to alienation itself, an end to estrangement from nature and each other, through **active** awareness of our 'species-essence' in a life of solidarity.

Arizmendi expresses this idea in his Reflections:

"Work is the attribute that awards us the highest honour of being a cooperator with God in the transformation and cultivation of nature and in the consequent advancement of human welfare. The fact that people exercise their faculty of work in union with their peers and in a structure of noble cooperation and solidarity gives them not only nobility, but also the optimal productivity to make every corner of the Earth a pleasant and promising mansion for all. This is what work communities are for, and they are destined to help our people advance."

So we learn that part of human and other need is the *need* for justice. It is a need we all share, illustrated by the fact that you and I demand it as a right. Obviously in order that it be a right then justice must apply to all, otherwise it becomes privilege. Clearly, given the inequities which exist in the world right now, justice is privileged to a minority.

That's tough to look at squarely and modern culture provides diversion through consumption. An alienating culture which is in denial of our role as part of environment and consequently, in denial of parts of who we are. While many are not looking, capitalist culture ultimately denies justice to other people and species, as production around the world is so often based upon social and environmental *injustice*. We deny ourselves through a life-denying economics which destroys our planet and sees the military as the largest industry in the world.



"Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."

Pope Francis (Laudato si')

Then, defenders of capitalism frame natural human responses to economic injustice as 'protest', rather than as a catalyst for positive change. At COP 26 we saw people in the streets referred to using phrases such as the "pious certitudes of Extinction Rebellion and those protesting outside the COP 26 perimeter."

Our need for justice can be diverted through our own fear that we may be excluded, "othered", de-platformed, ridiculed, despised, even sometimes painted as traitorous, and always, always dismissed as "the protester".

If we see and experience existence as constant movement in a fully impermanent, totally interconnected, interpenetrating world, then to be human is to use our evolved capacity to experience that.

And, as Arizmendi taught, to experience that in the other, strengthening our ability to be with each other through our shared cooperative work and other collective activities. He would say

the awareness practiced on the Hassock, the Meditation cushion or on the Mussalla, combines with our work together to meet our collective needs.

Today Arizmendi would declare that economics, in the age of the three way crisis, sees our work as part of our experience of each other and the rest of nature, as part of the Earth System. Our own Formation therefore leads to a new co-working Formation-*with*-the-planet, expressed as Guardianship and Stewardship.

In my opinion, in Arizmendi we see that categories like theist and atheist are simply too narrow. They define too small a part of interconnected existence, ironically and largely to do with what is currently observable.

A bigger vision of reality is that of the crossroad. Every contradiction where change moves off from the consequences of the past, is a crossroad at which we each stand. At every experience at these crossroads we have choices to make. Do we choose to bring conscious awareness to interconnected existence using our own active input to strengthen these bonds of interconnection, or not?

Will we be the good Samaritan or walk past. Will we insist upon and build a Samaritan country or allow our country to oppress? Will we help build a good Samaritan international order? Will I study and act upon the histories and stories of injustice and how they interact and connect to each other and my own experience, so that a Samaritan international order can meet the needs of all? And what will a Samaritan order look like?

“Work is a path of personal and communal self-realization, individual perfection, and collective improvement; it is the epitome of an unquestionable social and humanist consciousness.”



To suggest that the very cooperative means we use to make anything does not express our nature and the nature of existence, to suggest that it is rather the very opposite characteristics of individualism, greed and consumption-addiction which truly reflect our nature, would see nothing made, ever.



Arizmendi would move us from the breadline into a cooperative bakery

If our social action is framed by thinking which denies other people economic equality, then when people suffer, at best we will welfarise them. At worst, and we've seen it once again recently during the Pandemic in late October 2021 where only 4% of Africa had a single dose of Covid 19 vaccine, we accept the systemic failure of capitalism to satisfy need, which is its nature.

If we can look at that squarely and give the only answer possible when asked what we would do if it was our children, then we can begin again. While we live we can always begin again. Because of course life has evolved forgiveness, which is a mainstay of cooperation, and both of which give us the gift of solidarity.

Provision of welfare comes from the revenue paid to Governments out of the sale of our work, in other words it arises socially through the gathering of taxes. There is no social control over the ways our taxes are used, other than at distant elections where we vote for people who can no longer represent us.

Instead of representatives we see Governments which have brought to fruition intergenerational separation amongst and within our peoples, the development of big class and caste differences, intergenerational poverty, permanent war and incredibly damaging addictive cycles inherent in big pharma, through *misuse* of that part of our wages we pay as tax.

This is not to advocate for an end to taxation, welfare and the safety net, as that is one of the only means available at this time in history where capitalism is being made free, with less and less regulation, while ordinary people are regulated into poverty.





Rather, it is simply to state the obvious truth that welfare will not, cannot, eradicate the need for welfare.

Globally now shareholders have more rights than citizens and we have truly cycled back to the early demand of a younger capitalism, at that time situated as they were in colonies and struggling to break free from mother countries: "*No taxation without representation.*"

Where our Governments are locked-in to corporate interests and cannot even discuss the content of agreements, those Governments fail to represent us. They have been superseded.

We need new ways to tax and tithe.

In Mondragon Arizmendi and his fellow Cooperators developed policies which allowed the system of cooperatives to function differently, *where the welfare of all is built into economic output*:

-  Production to meet need through democratic planning of the economy
-  A tax from every cooperative to be used by all cooperatives in the areas of health and welfare, research and development, education and training and finance
-  Training into not only tactile hands on jobs, but also into administrative and management roles through ongoing training across every enterprise
-  Transparent sharing across all cooperatives through skill sharing

Arizmendi taught that part of formation is to strive for dignity of the person to be placed at the centre of our collective work. *When we become impatient with the need we all share for human dignity* then collectives of any sort, even cooperatives where the ownership is distributed to everyone, risk the organisation's democracy.

This is even more demonstrable in relation to First Nations peoples, refugees and economically-colonised peoples. We dehumanise and demonise those we do not understand in order to provide us with the issues which define the enemy we want, rather than the enemy we need to face, both externally and within ourselves.

When we can face the real enemy we create a vision capable of seeing the other as ourselves, and then we can begin to maximise the returns on our cooperation.

Without social justice therefore, our work and often the use to which our taxes are put becomes an alienating presence in our lives, which dehumanises all of us.

Formation is hard work, but it is fruitful and empowering of us as we cooperate towards social and systemic change.

As Arizmendi proposed: "Humanity is ultimately the creator, the centre, and the end of all economic and social life."

Reading this statement, especially in today's context where we face a three-way existential crisis, is uplifting isn't it! We might add – "And therefore the role we have evolved to play is to end the separations, falsely created and maintained by force, which block our road towards Guardianship and Stewardship".

More than half the job is done! The fact that collective, cooperative production exists in every type of social system, because cooperation is *the only way* that we can physically produce anything, provides us with the *potential* to take up our role as Guardians and Stewards.

Here Arizmendi beautifully defines his Distributist beliefs. It is very helpful for us if we extend his statement to include the role of Nature in the economy:

"Ownership does not grant the owner the right to abuse goods. In the final analysis, none of us can rightly feel that our role in their creation of our goods gives us an absolute right to dispose of them. Many people have played a part in their existence and production, and the common good must be weighed and taken into account in their use and practical application."

Cooperation does not just involve the productive process, distributed ownership is also the only way we will ever afford what is currently unaffordable. To build housing for all, build entirely green housing projects owned cooperatively, with investment from our union-based workers' capital, our Superannuation/Pension Funds. To create aged care facilities which can never offer the level of returns demanded by capitalists in a private sector, but which can for the vast majority of us, allow people to see out their time surrounded by life enhancing meaning, dignity and respect, the *real* return.

Simply, and to repeat, in a social sector of the economy what we place value on and what we regard as profit are governed by those values arising out of interconnection, where it is understood we are what we do. Whereas in the private market the underpinning values arise out of, and deepen, a sense of separation: a belief that we are what we have, even where that is causing geophysical, biophysical and moral collapse.

Is not competition at the expense of other people, exploitation of other people in order to profit, only one available means for a powerful minority to “meet their needs”? Unfortunately, No! As Pope Francis says, they are in the throes of the most dangerous addictive cycle there is. And from which people cannot break free outside of some sort of personal, existential crisis. Indeed it is an historical irony, given military interventions into the Middle East, that we once again are speaking of a “Road to Damascus” experience.

When neoliberals speak of choice as an underpinning ideological pillar then isn't it true that communities need to be given a thoroughgoing (in the sense of two of that words origins: root and radical) choice? To meet our needs and to live in ways which, as a minimum, do as little harm to each other and the planet as circumstances allow? To go to the roots of our economic problems in the knowledge that the radical nature of the three way crisis needs an economics capable of addressing those roots?

Limited to only a private market economy, inevitably we end up right here, where we are now, where production of weapons and war products in order to profit (for decades now the military has remained the largest industry in the world, first reported to us by the United Nations Secretary Kofi Annan in 2002), has become the largest part of the global economy. We inevitably end up in the irrational circumstance where Australian neoliberals are intent upon us joining the top ten of manufacturers in the export of military hardware and products.

This is truly the worst example of the economics underpinning the denial of the other and ourselves, of alienation from the self.

SOME ELEMENTS OF AN EARTHWORKER NATIONAL PROGRAM

- **For urgent discussion towards a program of policy measures.**
- 1. ***Strengthen the social sector of the Australian economy***, linking cooperatives, mutuals, credit unions, workers' unions, superannuation and communities across Australia through the introduction of a supportive legislative and regulatory framework for cooperatives and mutuals, at all three levels of Government. This framework to focus on a systemically integrated, networked and coordinated cooperative sector, working to a democratically determined plan, rather than a corporate framework of separate cooperatives. Cooperatives do not function where cooperatives compete with each other rather than cooperate with each other. Removal of all “Free” Trade barriers and restrictions to ***Social Sector Fair Trade Agreements (SSFTA's: International Agreements where the surplus is used for the common***

good and the profits are the climate jobs). Restrictions such as casualisation, sham contracting, cash in hand and offshoring of work. Support for a social sector which is not constrained by “Free” Trade barriers, such as refusing the right of unionists to preference the provision of locally made goods in their industrial agreements. Support for the development of new socialised market forms which provide communities the opportunity to support locally manufactured and grown goods, such as the *systemically organised Earthworker Cooperatives*, and encouragement for these Earthworker Cooperatives to form SSFTA’s with overseas cooperatives and mutuals, unions and superannuation/pension funds and national and regional governments globally.

2. ***Governments to support a move to establish a Cooperative Superannuation Fund as one available choice for Australian families, in other words to increase the choices available to everyone.*** A Superannuation Cooperative which reflects the socialised character of this workers’ capital, with a federated democratic ownership structure. This will finally place *the superannuated wage* where it belongs, as a part of the social sector of the Australian economy and will provide the financial power to grow that sector.
3. ***Raise the stature of ME Bank (Currently owned by our Superannuation Funds) to the Cooperative Bank of Australia (CBA), as our new National bank.*** A campaign to explain the fact that Australian superannuants own the Bank. A campaign to partner ME Bank with other socialised capital banking institutions, such as the Cooperative Australia Bank to form **CBA**, as well as a campaign for divestment by ME Bank from the big four banks (putting an end to an obvious conflict of interest).
4. ***Public Social Partnerships (PSP’s):*** That investment be organised through the use of ***PSP’s*** which combine socialised capital, such as our superannuated wages and the Bank we own, with Government investment, and which are subject to democratic inputs into planning by Australian members, to maximise efficiency. PSP’s using superannuation and other socialised capital organisations to acquire some key, previously publicly-owned assets, vesting ownership directly into the hands of the whole Australian people, while partnering with Governments to manage and administer the new, socialised entities. Public Social Partnerships (PSP’s), partnering with the Superannuation Cooperative, other financial cooperatives, the Cooperative Bank and ME, and other mutuals with Governments, to *construct and run* a new green electricity grid, a new mass transit grid, a new water-harvesting and distribution grid, and other bioregional land repair and maintenance infrastructures which the Earth System requires. Cooperative ownership of the new entities once completed. Support for the development of cooperatives among our farming communities and small businesses, encouraging them to cooperate with other cooperatives, mutuals, credit unions, workers’ unions and communities who wish to operate within a strong social sector. A buy-back program to take back all arable Australian land with PSP support for the development of more, and specifically organic, regenerative and cooperative farming practices.
5. ***Regulation of all food production:*** Organic, local (backyards to be farmed and permacultured). Large scale farming to move to organic through gradual regeneration of land. Where farm communities wish, that socialised capital, such as our

superannuated wages, co-invest with them, and that the cooperative farming model be encouraged. *The formation of an Urban Farming Cooperative, open to farmers who have had to leave the land and other worker owners*, to farm our cities' backyards (including water harvesting) where residents cannot do it themselves; training for urban farming cooperators in Permaculture, water management and sustainable practices. All produce to split two ways: One half to the householder, one half to the urban farmers. The capacity for people with no yard space to participate in a consumer section of the Urban Farming Cooperative through a weekly payment and thereby purchase food produce.

6. ***Scale out the Earthworker Energy Manufacturing Cooperative using massive joint Government and socialised capital investment using a PSP***, into solar-thermal in Australia's centre and job creation in Solar, Wind and Water manufacture, installation, maintenance, and power generation in all States and Territories.
7. ***A PSP to purchase and socialise the Mining and Energy Industry***, to eradicate the competition between brown coal and renewables and, in the short term, to use the entire wealth of those industries for the common good.
8. ***Installations of the 1.4 MWH Sodium Nickel Chloride Battery Storage systems on all Government lands***, and especially Waterfront, Rail, Education Department and other Government lands where appropriate at the three levels of Government, throughout Australia. Earthworker Cooperatives to set up PSP's to that end.
9. ***Establishment of a National Shipping Line Cooperative*** to develop an Australian fleet using PSP's. Massive investment in maritime manufacture and crewing. Establish Battery Storage Containers using Earthworker Cooperative's sodium nickel chloride battery on all of the Line's shipping to power our ships, but on some of the vessels to build storage-only ships capable of sailing into crisis situations to provide power, medical support, workshops and Trades for building, metals fabrication, urban farming, training, etc. (See elements of a global plan for discussion, below).
10. ***Massive job creation through PSP's in water harvesting manufacture***, R&D and installation; mandatory water catchment installation regulations for all buildings. That the manufacturing be carried out by community owned and controlled Earthworker cooperatives, partnering with Governments.
11. ***PSP's to socialise Rail, Tram and Bus Transport, and a National fleet of sodium nickel Battery operated delivery Trucks, and buy-back of all rail freight gates***: New track; east-west/north-south efficiencies in our cities; as rapidly as possible and mindful of transfer of jobs, all line haul freight to be moved to rail; freeway systems converted to include electrified rail, tram and bus through major infrastructural spending.
12. Through the use of workers' superannuation the ***housing debt be eliminated for all Australian households initially for key workers and 35 years and under with children***. Further green superannuation investment to be prioritised for new entirely green housing stock, as per the ***Earthworker-Elevo proposal***. Capacity for Australians (especially older Australians) to sell into that stock, thereby provide for their children's housing.

13. ***Restructure of our military capacity*** towards a primary, professional concern with Australia-wide and regional disaster relief, critical incidents at home and abroad and climate emergency response. Preparation of a **Defence White Paper** on “Ecological Disaster and Critical Response”. **To partner with all other countries in this work.**
14. ***Curriculum change towards education and training which covers the methods and techniques for personal, organisational and economic solidarity through Cooperatives and Mutuels.*** All curriculum, primary, secondary, post-secondary to postgraduate studies to include: sustainable food production, solar, wind and water studies, practical eco-studies which lead to species conservation and regeneration. All curriculum to include the study of Social Sector Economics.
15. The detail of such measures can only be, must be, developed by ***widely representative committees*** made up of Australians who are committed to outcomes which deal with climate emergency, species extinction and the threat posed by the global, privately owned military industries. Establish committees of the ordinary people combined with appropriate expertise drawn from ***independent university academic and scientific communities***, with each committee to have available subcommittees based both regionally and by industry, in their work. *Appointment onto the committees must be based up the recognition that we are now in an emergency and that, like the Second World War economy and society, criteria and priorities must be adapted accordingly.*

This is partial and we expect that discussions across our communities and globally over 2022/3 will begin to provide the detail required. Meanwhile the Earthworker project is already engaged in pursuing this Program.

Arising out of the Earthworker National Program, we are now embarking upon discussions to clarify a Global Plan of Action which can outline a Program of some of the most pressing mitigation and regenerative measures we need to be taking for and with the Earth System.




SOME ELEMENTS OF AN EARTHWORKER GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION

- **For discussion towards a program of international policy measures.**
1. Where PSP's involving Earthworker Cooperatives, Superannuation/Pension Funds and Governments are used globally, that all work be done under a UN General Assembly mandate to address equity and to offset the risk of demutualisation and profiteering. Yearly audits and reports open to full transparency. No contract of work with either private or public sectors to include a Commercial in Confidence clause. All auditing and Annual General Meetings to have UN General Assembly representative participation, and as well the Cooperative Board to report to the General Assembly as part of its transparency and reporting responsibilities.
 2. Connected to the policy for a National Shipping Cooperative in Australia, to develop a fleet of containerised sodium nickel chloride battery ships, with battery power up to 2000 MWh. Develop an Earthworker Cooperative, ***Earth Systems Mitigation and Regeneration Cooperative***, to deploy purpose built vessels for energy supply in emergency conditions around the world. Recharging to occur at all offshore wind sites as well as land-based wind and solar sites. R&D to be conducted on wave

generation/horizontal hydro technology to be placed on all shipping. UN sponsorship of the Cooperative's work with all affiliates paying into a ***UN Earth Systems Mitigation and Regeneration Fund***. While each vessel can supply power for extended periods, and where practicable, the vessel to have the construction and metal fabrication workshops, equipment and materiel needed to install solar, wind and water energy sources at crisis sites. Further, to provide medical support, workshops and trades for water purification, urban and rural farming, training, etc. All auditing and Annual General Meetings to have UN General Assembly representative participation, and as well the Cooperative Board to report to the General Assembly as part of its transparency and reporting responsibilities.

3. A UN General Assembly mandate to socialise the world's fishing fleets. Under the UN to establish PSP towards this end, to buy out existing owners. *Starting with the depressed labour economies to immediately introduce a rational, sustainable fishing plan which employs and trains workers in the current industries and involves them fully, eventually as worker-owners of the cooperative, in the ongoing development of the plan.* The cooperative plan to include the introduction of regeneration of ocean ecologies, with scientists and farmers cooperating towards sustainability. All auditing and Annual General Meetings to have UN General Assembly representative participation, and as well the Cooperative Board to report to the General Assembly as part of its transparency and reporting responsibilities.
4. Establish a ***Global Workers and Farmers Landcare Cooperative*** in every country to manage forest regeneration in PSP's with each Country's Government, Super/Pension Funds and other mutuals, under UN General Assembly coordination, drawing on the proposed ***UN Earth Systems Mitigation and Regeneration Fund***. The Cooperative to introduce Guardianship of sustainable farming and forestry practices, regenerative farming practices and urban farming which stops forest removal (This last point is at least pointed towards at COP 26 where a Forest agreement was established; we need to see the detail of that agreement which has announced a 2030 deadline for an end to deforestation as there are so many things which can be achieved before 2030 e.g. Around the use of bamboo and hemp crops). To work immediately and with real urgency towards involving all countries in the growth, harvest and global distribution of an ***Equal Food Growth and Distribution System*** in order to address current unequal distribution of, and access to, food and water for all.
5. Repurpose the global military, starting with countries where that can be achieved, into a ***Global Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Response Force***. There is absolute urgency now that we assist populations and other species in the battle for survival. Such an intervention force, especially given the size and spread of the global military industry, can cooperate with all Governments, cooperative teams, Universities, scientific communities which can be proven to be free from private, vested interests and civil societies around the world, to begin the massive task of a logistical audit of current militaries to determine new materiel needed and the training and education which will be needed by a new, coordinated-intervention force, in their use in crisis situations.

For instance:

-  Pontoons for medical treatment and medivac
-  Mobile desalination plants
-  Food ships with immediate response capability to cover that period it takes for other medium and long-term solutions to be deployed.

6. *Connected to (5) – The UN General Assembly, with the support of the Security Council, to mandate an end to all private sector investment in the military industries.*



Sometimes we have to work in the most extraordinary conditions. We are called on to provide leadership out of the most dangerous of circumstances. No matter how dire our situation we must realise that we all have the same need for life, dignity and respect, and that we have more in common, always, than circumstance would have us believe. Life, dignity and respect unite us all, Amen.