

econeWS

ECOLOGY PARTY NEWSLETTER

Nº 4 September 1979

Party conference only days away

Come to Keele!

Over 300 members are expected to attend the Ecology Party's annual conference at Keele University. Already over 100 have registered, and many more are expected to do so in the next few days.

The conference will be an historic

occasion. With a ten fold increase in membership over the last twelve months, and still flushed with our success in the General Election, conference will mark the emergence of the Ecology Party as a serious, credible, political force. It will also set the course which will guide the Party's development in the crucial months to come.

The conference opens on Friday 7th September and spans three days through to Sunday. From a cursory glance at the programme, it promises to be a hectic and exciting weekend, ranging over the many important topics that need to be discussed and resolved.

Some resolutions, such as the one on animal welfare, are unlikely to generate much disagreement, but there will almost certainly be heated debate over the proposal for a central office in London. The National Executive Committee are convinced that such a move is necessary, while other members see a London headquarters as a contradiction of the Party's decentralist philosophy.

Benfield's balloon



Mike Benfield, Eco candidate for Midlands Central in the European Election, about to traverse his constituency in a balloon. This novel method of campaigning helped Mike poll 6380 votes, but also invited some snide remarks associating ecopolitics with hot air!

Major changes

The conference will also consider several proposals to amend the constitution of the Party. Some of these are merely cosmetic measures designed to tidy up loose ends, but others propound quite major changes. Should the Party be able to expel people whose membership is seen to be against the Party's interest? Should members be permitted to serve on the NEC for longer than the current limit of three successive years? Another controversial proposal comes from the Somerset branch, who will be arguing that the capitation fee system should be altered, with a much higher proportion of membership subscriptions being retained by branches. The conference will also have to decide whether or not we should have a Party Leader, elected at conference, in addition to the position of National Chairman.

Eco policy

The policy debates give the Party a much needed opportunity to discuss Eco policy in four vital areas. The debates — on Defence, Land, Employment, and Energy — will be initiated by a paper on the subject, presented by one of the Party's branches. In the ensuing discussion, members will have a crucial role to play in shaping Party policy.

Turn to page 7 for your special four page conference supplement.

eco

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GREEN LOVE

Four months after the General Election things are still going smoothly for Maggie & Co. It's too early yet for serious challenges to be directed against a government elected with such a large Parliamentary majority. But the new Tory government is more right wing than any most of us can remember; it won't be long before Britain is being ground between the social economic effects of rampant Toryism, the harsh reality of energy shortages, and an inevitable and fierce left-wing backlash.

That's a bleak picture not only for Britain, but for Eco too. Right now our tiny party is riding happily along on a tide of post-election contentment; only a small proportion of our membership really knows what an incredible amount of hard work and sacrifice was necessary to create our election success. If that success is to continue there must be a lot more exhausting work, and a lot more sacrifice, by many people.

The urgency is impossible to over-emphasise. Of course we all know that every day millions of barrels of precious oil are used up, gone for ever. But the political analysis above has other implications. Many people expect another election in only two years. If they are right — if the present honeymoon period turns quickly into another election campaign then we will be plunged headlong into a boiling cauldron of vitriolic attacks, foul-play, and extreme Left-Right polarisation. If ECO is to achieve anything worthwhile in such a campaign we must start building up the funds, the experience, the organisation, the policies and the public image we need now.

But there's something else we'll need too. Currently what holds ECO together is its shiny philosophy and a pretty minimal organisation. If we are to go through hard-fought and bitter campaigns and come out with (let's face it) possibly disappointing results, and yet still fight on, ECO must be bound together with the strength that can only come from close and trusting personal relationships.

Such relationships will not appear through relaxed discussion of say, the technicalities of fast reactors, between members who would tend to get on well anyway, though that helps. They will grow through people, including those who do not naturally warm to each other, working together under pressure; learning to respect and trust each other as human beings, and to tolerate views which they find barely comprehensible. We know it's possible; there are already plenty of people in the Party who have built up the finest possible human relationships despite total disagreement on such vital issues as nuclear arms. But it's not easy. It means finding that delicate, almost impossible balance, between working furiously for ideas because we fervently believe they are right, while fostering the humility we need to accept that some of them may be wrong. It means putting Branch before self, Region before Branch, Party before Region, above all Generations to come before Party. It means approaching our work and each other with a commodity called Love: a commodity neglected by Toryism, forgotten by Socialism, and steam-rolled by Materialism.

It's not easy. But we must do it. And if any party can do it, it's ECO.

Keith Rushworth

IN PRAISE OF CREATIVE TENSION

Life in the Ecology Party at present is not particularly ecological. However hard we try to adopt all the regulation earth-stewardship practices, we spend energy travelling great distances to meetings, we do not have enough time to cherish our families, we do not adequately cultivate either our real or our metaphorical gardens. That is part of a wider paradox, and in the light of debate in the Party, it is as well to restate it.

The nature of the social, economic and political crisis is generally agreed. One can opt out. One can ameliorate through that British institution, the Good Cause. One can sit back and await the revolution, workers', authoritarian, anarchist.

But by the act of joining the Ecology Party one accepts a more problematical task. We are constructing a new society within the decaying fabric and with the tools of the old. There is no historical precedent. Above all, this means continually making compromises without compromising our integrity.

There are reasons for believing the strategy can work. Conventional electioneering mixes happily with bikes and recycled paper. Our sincerity, the intellectual authority of our case, and our preparedness to change the system from within together generate sympathy and votes — and new members with a vast reservoir of enthusiasm.

They are also winning respect where it matters for our effectiveness — among journalists (and some politicians in other parties) who now seek us out because we are a demonstrably fresh voice with a cohesive and hopeful alternative. Professional and academic doors are opening. And if being taken seriously by Anna Ford is some sort of accolade, we have deserved it!

That is a transformed Party from the one I joined only four years ago. Then we were trapped in a futile counterpoint of too few resources and little visibility. It is time to rejoice that we have broken free, even while we now confront the real test. How do we maintain the expectations raised by our irruption onto the political scene? How do we go from that first, easy, 1.8% to the shares which will win power? How do we do it when the crisis is gathering speed sooner than we expected?

The answer, of course, is like the hedgehogs making love: carefully and with difficulty.

Which is where one comes back to the paradox. We face the problems of success. When workloads, even though widely spread, become impossible for volunteers in their spare time, we have to distinguish the tasks that can be devolved from those that realistically can only be done by full-time staff. Consistency with our philosophy of a sustainable society demands a healthily decentralised structure, yet a credible political presence pushes us towards a base in London and a recognisable national leadership.

ECO is being watched — by some jaundiced but many more expectant eyes. However much the Party needs the purists as its conscience, too much zeal for the verities of ecotopia — like rejection of an effective organisation because it is not decentralised enough — would be to sell out to the bankrupt system that rules at present.

In fact our Constitution and our practice are very decentralist, and they are based firmly on consensus. To hold the structure intact means diligently seeking new mechanisms of democracy. It means discriminating between anarchic high jinks, and the more complex business of judging issues that are emphatically not black and white, against ecological criteria.

The creation of this balance has been an achievement in its own right. Now it must be maintained, for it is part of the commanding imperative for this generation. Let creative tension continue!

Jonathan Tyler

NEWS

Foreign Office opens diplomatic relations with Eco

Jonathan Tyler was recently invited to give a seminar at Wilton Park, a Foreign Office sponsored conference centre. Here is his report.

"I went with some trepidation. The theme was 'the political and social implications of world shortages in natural resources and energy'. On the evening before my seminar there was an erudite review of the dangerous shambles in the Law of the Sea arising from the race to control its riches. Fellow-guests at dinner included senior managers from an oil multi-national and a clearing bank. Among other course-members were a Californian Professor of Economics whose biography said he invests in oil and a German specialist in long-term forecasting. The proceedings were being televised for a documentary about Wilton Park, in which ECO was to have equal treatment with Conservative and Labour spokesmen.

The response was intriguing. I stressed that the constraints on the traditional economic model (the cycle of investment and productivity, growth and full employment) are now operating so strongly at so many points that the cycle is irreparably broken. Survival in any decent form depends on moving towards the ecological alternative with all possible speed. In a lengthy question-period not

one speaker challenged the analysis head on. Technological fixes and market forces were barely visible as proffered solutions to a recognised crisis.

More speakers were more concerned to identify ECO's credentials as a serious political force (which I think they did). They worried, rightly, over whether ecological authoritarianism can be avoided. They queried whether easy-going consumption and our atrophied democracy can be radically changed sufficiently rapidly. Some rejoiced in the growing rejection of purely materialistic values. Privately later a senior policeman shared my concern that a failure of the established politico-economic system to accept our ordered and responsible critique could break down respect for government and thence erode civil liberties.

These are key items for our agenda. Wilton Park may be light-years away from an inner-city doorstep, but the message is the same. We may be winning the argument against conventional economic assumptions. We may inspire sympathy for our attempt to confront the transition. We have not yet won the intellectual and practical battle to prove that what is inevitable is worthy of a positive initiative — or to show how the transition can be managed."

Regional News

Scottish Regional Conference

The Scottish Region held its first Conference on Saturday 4th August, hosted by the Edinburgh branch. It was attended by about 1/4 of the Scottish membership, rather less than hoped for but hardly surprising given that it was called at fairly short notice and the fact that some members would have had to travel 450 miles to attend. Distance is a hard geographical fact that will give us difficulties in the future if an integrated region is aimed at.

The Conference was introduced with a speech from Prof. Manning on the necessity and urgency of our cause. There followed reports from the Edinburgh branch and from the newly-formed Aberdeen branch, which prompted discussion of the ways in which we must adapt our emphases to appear relevant to people in different areas. Because the majority of Scottish members have joined recently, short sessions were included on Party structure, the South-West's sub-

mission on Regional Autonomy and on strategies in local elections.

Because this was our first Conference procedural business was kept to a minimum, but included the question of the frequency and format of future conferences, and the discussion and ratification of a motion on policy formation to the Annual Conference in Keele. Two guest speakers were invited to talk briefly under the heading of Energy Options for Scotland, which proved very popular. Finally elections were held for the posts of NEC-Representative and Scottish Regional Organiser.

South West Regional Conference

The South West Region met in Taunton on July 7th to consider the report of the Somerset working party on Party administration. Their detailed report, proposing a more decentralised system of administration, was unanimously carried, and it will be available to members from other regions at the annual conference. Several branches also decided to submit a resolution calling for a change in the capitation fee system to the national conference.

IN BRIEF

ANNA FORD PUTS ECO FIRST

"Why can't I do it myself?" is the name of a new series on Capital Radio starting this autumn. The interviewer is Anna Ford, the ITN newscaster, and the first organisation to be featured in this series is ECO, explaining what it is like to start your own political party.

Manchester Central By Election

The Greater Manchester branch has decided to contest the forthcoming by-election in the Manchester Central constituency. The NEC is contributing £150 towards the cost of the campaign, which will include a full canvass of the constituency, an election address to every household, and a series of meetings in the run up to polling day.

A candidate has not yet been selected, but will probably be a local branch member.

Beckenham result

Eco candidate Peter Greenwood polled 286 votes in a recent district by election in Beckenham. Although he was beaten by the other three candidates, his 10% share of the poll was a creditable result. The Beckenham branch hopes to contest another local by election in the autumn.

Leeds By Election

The Leeds Eastern branch is contesting a local by election on August 23rd. Preparations for a strong campaign are in hand, and leaflets have already been printed. The candidate is a new member, Robert Evans.

New NEC Member

A new regional representative has been elected to the National Executive Committee. John Foster, of 52 Alness Rd., Whalley Range, Manchester 16, was chosen as the North West representative at the region's recent conference.

Urgent Appeal

There has been a very poor response to the request in the last issue for candidates in the May local elections to send details of their results to Sally Willington, the National Secretary. This information is urgently needed — it is important that we know how many councillors we have! Secondly, after our first truly nationwide spread of local election candidates, it is essential that we gather all the results together for analysis. Please get the information to Sally Willington (address on back page) as soon as possible.

POLICY FORUM

Anarchism: the missing link?

Sowing wild oats

One of the most attractive periods in English history is that of the Commonwealth and Protectorate in which, for the first and in some respects the only time in our history, there was an opportunity to explore and even to put into practice some of the burning and seething political ideas which lie in wait to take over as the fabric of the state dissolves.

One of the best remembered of the ideas explored at that time were those of the Levellers, John Lilburne and Gerrard Winstanley. If ever there have been good men in history these were they. Good intentions flowed out of their writings.

This was perhaps the main springboard and platform for Anarchism in England; the ideas became important abroad some-what later, and almost whatever Anarchists have written since, the writing has been attractive and in some ways beyond the possibility of any denial. Here for example's Gerrard Winstanley in "The New Law of Righteousness": "And when the Lord doth shew unto me the place and manner, how He will have us that are called common people to manure and work upon the common lands, I will then go forth and declare it in my action, to eat my bread with the sweat of my brows, without either giving or taking hire, looking upon the land as freely mine as anothers."

Living simply

Since then much of what Anarchists have written on the surface of it would seem to qualify them for membership of the Ecology Party. William Godwin wrote that he expected technological progress to advance to the point at which labour need not take up more than half an hour a day "providing men lived simply." Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was a persuasive advocate of the rights and value of local communities and decentralisation. Peter Kropotkin in "La Conquete du Pain" and in "Fields, Factories and Workshops", developed the principle of decentralisation and of labour intensive agriculture and horticulture in a way which now reads as if it could have been written in the 1970's. He was in the 1890's one of the pioneer advocates of small firms, small farms and he came near to pointing out that improved telecommunications would make it possible for office workers to work at home.

Then perhaps one of the most influential statements of the Anarchist principle came in the foreword to the 1946 edition of "Brave New World" in which Huxley

wrote that if we are to have any chance of avoiding his catastrophic totalitarian vision, we shall need politics that are "Kropotkinesque and co-operative".

So there is a strong and very humane background to draw on. Indeed Anarchism seems to have the unique advantage of being not so much an idea as being an imperative. Kropotkin meditates on this point: "From all times" he wrote, "two currents of thought and action have been in conflict in the midst of human societies." There is on the one hand the authoritarian current; on the other there is the 'mutual aid' tendency; he concludes that anarchy represents the mutual aid current and "We can therefore say that from all times there have been anarchists and statist".

Anarchism is thus an important idea which must be understood by a Party which is making so radical a challenge to the centralised and over-governed state as the Ecology Party is making. Clearly our present way of life is over-governed and over-centralised. Clearly we must establish a society which is largely based on communities, each of which has a very high degree of autonomy. Equally clearly, we must not make the same mistakes that many anarchists have made in the past. I suggest that we should therefore bear in mind the following two points which recognise the relationship between ecology and anarchism, but at the same time demonstrate that there is a very fundamental break in the tradition of anarchism when it is taken on board by ecology.

State framework

The first point concerns the framework of the state. One of the things we have to recognise about the free local community is that it is desperately vulnerable. There have been experiments in just such communities in the past, indeed these were the first Anatolian communities that came into existence after the neolithic agricultural revolution, and they provided the launching pad from which a more developed civilisation sprang. The description of the transition from the era of the communities in the third millennium BC to societies of the kind we now know makes sad reading.

The fatal weakness of the self reliant community in the past is that it has not been protected by a strong state framework. Indeed the state has had to exploit the agricultural and industrial potential of its people to the limit in order to be

able to establish its own economic and military power.

In spite of the fact that a strong state and local communities have not been successful bedfellows in the past, there is every reason to believe that now is the time when we could approach a real break with tradition. The only way the state will be able to survive and secure reasonable standards of living and freedom for its people in the future is by establishing and protecting decentralised local communities. Centralisation isn't working anymore. On the other hand, if this policy of fostering decentralisation is to work there must be a corresponding effective state framework, otherwise society will collapse into mere anarchy in the worst sense of the word. We must take the wide view, and within an effective and enlightened state system which confessedly and inevitably has an element of centralisation within it, we must create a framework by which the communities which we shall so desperately need in the future are protected.

The second point to remember is that anarchism, in the sense that the main anarchist writers such as Kropotkin have used it, is itself a product of the centralised state system. They use the language and descriptions which have flowed from a centralised state; it is based on the idea of the absence of laws, the absence of government and the freedom of the individual spirit to pursue its own wish and make up its own mind.

Consistency

In fact, the early communities were certainly not communities in which there were no rules; still less were they communities in which individual free will had anything like the same meaning that it has now. The early communities held together not as a result of laws, but in response to something else which is much vaguer and much more difficult to define, and which is quite outside the tradition and vocabulary to which we have become accustomed. Robert Redfield in the "Primitive World Before the Urban Revolution" wrote that the common aims of a community are "Not stated as matters of doctrine but are implied by the many acts that make up the living that goes on in the society. The morale of a folk society is not dependent on discipline exerted by force, but upon the concurrence and consistency of many or all of the actions which make up the whole round of life."

The successful communities of the past have not been pools of individual response to individual whim and conscience. The community has, in a very profound

continued on next page

NEC REPORT

Waiting for conference

The latest N.E.C. meeting was held in Cornwall on 28th and 29th July. Thanks to the hospitality of Teddy Goldsmith and Jeremy Faull we were able to devote a whole weekend to a very full agenda; but as we dispersed there was some dissatisfaction with what had been achieved.

A detailed interim report by Peter Draper on how Eco could co-ordinate with like-minded groups in opposition to the nuclear programme, had received only rather hurried consideration; and discussion on the important question of what priority we should give this, had rather hurried consideration; and discussion on the important question of what priority we should give this, had been postponed until the next meeting. The general matter of our relationships with other organisations, and the issue of dual membership, had been insufficiently discussed. We had not found time to talk at all about ideas for future activities produced at the Candidates post-election conference in May, or about what sort of Party literature we should be generating in these next, crucial few months as the Tory lack of "solutions" becomes apparent. So the dissatisfaction was understandable.

Co-ordination

Nor is the cause of this state of affairs far to seek. There is uncertainty in the Party at large over the direction which Eco should now take, and controversy over what Party structure our decentralist programme, as published in the Manifesto commits us to adopting. Arguments have been rehearsed recently in ECONews

and elsewhere about how far we should continue to concentrate on presenting ourselves as a unified national party and how far we should stress action at community level, and the autonomy of Branches and Regions — offering ourselves as, in Alan Clarke's words, "a working model of the society at the end of our rainbow". Are these actually alternative options, and if not, where should the balance of emphasis be struck? These are fundamental questions about the Party's view of itself. The N.E.C. is committed to the ideal of consensus and designed to reflect opinion in the Party; so inevitably, while such issues remain unclear, administrative matters which raise them in one form or another will provoke disproportionately long debate, while some other urgent items receive less than their due of attention.

Thus our time at this meeting went very largely on further considering the establishment of a central office, and on discussing the working party's proposals for changes in our constitution. The first matter has been brought to a head by Andrea Hodgkinson's departure; it had become evident, long before this, that the task of processing initial enquiries and orders for literature is not one for which it is practicable to depend on unpaid help. A paid worker, Elizabeth Smith has been taken on to fulfil this role. Many people felt that the case for a proper permanent office had been conclusively reinforced, but suspicions of a 'centralist' bureaucracy remained — and discussion widened to include the proposals recently floated for debate at conference, envisaging much greater regional autonomy in administrative matters.

way, known where it is going. These communities have been full of institutions, customs and unwritten imperatives. The individual alone was a lost soul. Look at Claude Levi-Strauss writing about even such a central and demanding institution as marriage. "What is even more striking is the true feeling of repulsion which most societies have toward bachelorhood. One of the strongest field recollections of this writer was his meeting, among the Bororo of central Brazil, . . . a man about thirty years old: unclean, iii-fed, sad and lonesome. When asked if the man were seriously ill, the natives' answer came as a shock: what was wrong with him? — nothing at all, he was just a bachelor."

There seem to be a number of morals to draw . . . We really are exploring the possibility of a new way of life, new assumptions and a new vocabulary, and while we can recognise the value of much of the dissent which has arisen from the process of centralization and industrialization, we have to recognise that even ideas such as "free will" are as much a product of the fall from Eden as the totalitarian state itself.

There is much in anarchism for ECO to embrace and draw upon. But the relationship stops at the following points:

1) Successful communities are very far from being free of rules, and community

Representation

Even more disagreement followed the main proposal of the Constitution working party, that Eco should henceforth have an executive comprising the regionally elected representatives, and a number of nationally elected Officers, including a Party Leader. Voting procedures on the executive (to be called the National Council) would be weighted in favour of the regional representatives; but it was urged that we now needed someone who could be recognised by the public as entitled to speak for the Ecology Party on important issues as they arise, and that this was a function which should be distinguished from the chairmanship of the Council.

Enough people were unconvinced by these arguments for it to be felt impossible to advance the Constitutional proposals at Conference in the name of the N.E.C. as a whole. Those who supported them and those who opposed them will be putting their cases separately in the Constitution and Structure debate.

The present N.E.C. has seen Eco lift itself into national notice. If the new executive after September is to be effective in consolidating that achievement and co-ordinating the continuing campaign against a system which we all want changed, then uncertainties about the Party's structure and aims must be decisively resolved at Keele. It is vital that we have a Conference which is both properly representative and ready to confront problems creatively.

One of the last items discussed at this meeting was the forthcoming Manchester Central bye-election. We are going to fight it. Public attention will be on it. The Liberal vote in May was a mere 1,052; and if we were to succeed in beating that . . . ? Eco must be ready for its new responsibilities.

Ecobug

life is not simply the sum of the free wills of its members.

2) If autonomous communities are to survive, they must be protected by an effective state framework, using methods of democracy and regulations that are a far cry from anarchism.

David Fleming

Contributions to the Policy Page are invited from members. Articles should be about 1000 words in length and anyone who wishes to contribute an article should send a synopsis to David Fleming, 104 South Hill Park, Hampstead, NW3 2SN.

BRANCH NEWS

One hundred branches

The Ecology Party now has over 100 branches around the country. Alan Clarke gives details of the new branches in three particular regions, and reports on the activities of some of the longer established groups.

South West

Gloucestershire, until recently the only county in the Region without a branch, has finally succumbed. We now have two branches: in Stroud, the new Secretary is Carol Kambites, 21 Elmlea Road, Kings Stanley, Stonehouse, Glos., and in Cinderford, Paul West is acting as the focal point for a group calling itself the West Gloucestershire branch, recently publicised on TV and in the press because of its protests against open-cast mining in the Forest of Dean. Needless to say, the mining continues!

Other new branches in the Region include Yeovil (Secretary: Andy Emmands, 134 Mudford Road, Yeovil), Swindon (Rod Stradling, 32 Calcutt Street, Cricklade, Swindon, Tel: 751222) and Exmouth (Sally Vickers, Tel: Woodbury 32536). West Wiltshire (Westbury constituency) has broken away from the main Wiltshire branch, a split that has been on the cards since Sally Rodwell fought the seat in the General Election. In that time, the Westbury area group have produced a local newsletter, held a jumble sale that raised £100 towards election expenses, manned stalls at a number of local shows, and created headline news in the Wiltshire Times just recently by "cautiously welcoming" proposals for oil-drilling in the area. Plans for the immediate future include preparing a float for the Trowbridge Carnival and organizing a coach trip to the Alternative Technology Centre in Wales. This will take place on Sunday 23rd September, setting off from Bradford-on-Avon, and interested parties should contact Bryan Taylor on Trowbridge 2398. The cost will be £3.50 inclusive of entrance fee.

In ECONEWS 3, I touched on the re-organization going on in Devon, and various people have provided me with more information. The North Devon contact is Michael Holloway, 70 Lynhurst Ave, Barnstaple (Tel: 71612) and in West Devon, Liz Sigmund, currently writing a book on chemical pollution, to be published next year by Pluto Press, is keen to start a branch and hopes to hold a meeting early in September. Her address is Elsford Town Farm, Yelverton (Tel: 3966). In Plymouth, John Chadwick has left, for a life on the ocean wave, and enquiries in the area should now be directed to Frances Long, 125 Durnford Street, Stonehouse, Plymouth.

And finally, the Exeter Ecology Party, according to its latest branch newsletter, has now begun to collect old newspapers and magazines on a regular basis. Collections are being made on the first Wednesday of every month, and for the time being will cover the Rougemont area — a Ward that will be contested by Peter Frings in the next district elections.

West Midlands

There has been considerable activity in recent months. Stafford now has a branch: Paul Baker, New Paddocks, 45 Deanshill Close, Stafford (59014), as does Worcester: Mrs Selina Import, Furze Farm, Peopleton, Worcester. Embryonic branches are consolidating at Market Drayton in Shropshire, in the Bromsgrove and Redditch area, and there is a rumour of one being started in Broadway, Worcs.

Early in July, a meeting was held in Birmingham at which the existing Stourbridge branch expanded to become the Halesowen & Stourbridge branch: Derek Rudd, 86 Meriden Ave, Stourbridge (021 722 6061) and the South Birmingham branch shrank to the Selly Oak branch: Joe Benett (see "Noticeboard"). Embryonic branches were started for Edgbaston, Solihull, Sutton Coldfield and Wolverhampton & Walsall. Enquiries about branches not yet fully-fledged should be sent to Joe Benett.

The first West Midlands Regional Conference will be held on Saturday October 6th in Malvern, which already has a branch: Jeremy Hall, 15 Sycamore Close, Malvern Link, Worcs. (068 45 65995). Branches are still needed in Herefordshire the Shrewsbury/Ludlow area as well as in the Leamington/Warwick and Stratford districts. Offers to fill these gaps to the Regional Organizer, please.

South East

The South London branch, whose official address is 59A Hackford Road, SW9, are working on a paper for Conference '80 on the topic of Alternative/Intermediate Technology and would like to hear the views of other branches. On the other side of Town, David Fleming and Steve Lambert were the guest speakers at a public meeting of the Enfield branch on 15th June, with an audience of fifty. Another meeting will be held on Friday 21st September at 7.30 pm in Foresters Hall, Chase Side, Enfield, when Laurence D Hills, Director of the Henry Doubleday Research Association, will be the guest speaker. Mr Hills has recently joined the Party.

A new branch in East Surrey (the

Chancellor's constituency) was formed on 18th June. It is based in Oxted and broadly follows the constituency boundaries, although there is some question about whether Mrs Lejeune may be able to form another branch in Warlingham. Officers are Peter Draper (Chairman), Daphne Crawley-Moore (Membership Secretary and Treasurer) and Mrs "Scottie" Waller, Pleasance Court, Dormans Park, East Grinstead, Sussex (Secretary). Another branch came into being on July 2nd with the inaugural meeting of the Eastbourne and District Ecology Party. The first action of the branch was to arrange for a letter in the name of the branch to be addressed to the local Newspaper, protesting at the recently announced Government policy on Nuclear Power and the proposed construction of Nuclear Power Stations.

Other newly-formed branches in the area are in Basildon, where the branch Secretary is Simon Ward, 63 Scrub Rise, Billericay, Essex (Billericay 54721), and in South Buckinghamshire. Unfortunately I have no address for this branch as yet — perhaps someone in the South Bucks branch could let me know in time for the next ECONEWS?

Finally, Laurence Thompson has written to explain to me that Berkshire now has two branches — not obvious from my last report — and these are Berkshire (Secretary: Laurence Thompson, 6 Hinton Road, Slough, Tel Burnham 5788) and Wokingham & Bracknell (Secretary: John Nicholson, 75 Abbotsbury, Great Hollands, Bracknell).

THE LITTLE GREEN BOOK

A TENANT'S GUIDE TO THE PLANET AND ITS PEOPLE, PLANTS, WILD LIFE, RESOURCES, FOOD, LAND, CITIES, FARMS, TRANSPORT, BUILDINGS, ENERGY, WORK, WASTE, POLLUTION, INSULATION, IDEAS AND ANSWERS, ALL IN QUICK-DRAW POCKET-SIZE FORMAT AT A SPECIAL PRICE FOR ECO.

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ECOLOGY PARTY CONFERENCE

Keele University September 7-8-9

This special four page supplement tells you how to get to conference, what's happening when you arrive, and gives details of accommodation at either the University of Keele, or a nearby camping site. It also enables you to vote in the postal ballot for the National Executive Committee — overleaf you will find the manifestos of the eleven candidates, and a

ballot paper. The booking form, which should be returned to the conference organizers as soon as possible, is on page 10.

The annual conference is the most important event in the Party's calendar — it is also a very inspirational occasion. I look forward to seeing you there.

Peter Frings

ACCOMMODATION

Booking a room at the University is the easiest, but unfortunately most expensive option. The organizers wish to strongly discourage delegates from booking one room for several people. This practice would contravene fire regulations, they say, and must be avoided.

There are two alternatives for members who want cheaper accommodation.

"Self sufficient" camping: The Trentham Gardens camping site is a local beauty spot 3 miles south of Stoke on the A34, and approximately 7 miles by road from Keele. Although early booking is strongly recommended, this very large site is unlikely to run out of space in early September. The cost is £2 per night per tent with two people, and 50p per extra person. The phone number of the site is 0782 657225.

'DEPENDENT' CAMPING

"Dependent" camping: For those without camping gear, Keith Rushworth is organizing the provision of tent space, and a basic cooked breakfast. You will only need to bring a sleeping bag, or two blankets and a dozen large safety pins, and be prepared to help put up/take down tents. Book for this accommodation on the booking form, but please don't use this facility if you can avoid it, as places may be limited by the number of tents that Keith can lay his hands on. For this reason, if you have a tent which you are willing to loan for the weekend, or if you will have spare tent space, please let Keith know as soon as possible. (Tel: 0532 672198).

A minibus shuttle service between the camping site and Keele will be provided by the Exeter branch.

.... ANY QUERIES?

Contact Ron Andrews, at 18 Cofton Lake Road, Birmingham 45, (021 445 2576) for enquiries concerning the University and facilities. All other queries should be addressed to the Conference Organizer, David Taylor, 13 St James' Square, Bath, Avon. (0225 319434)

HOW TO GET THERE

For those arriving by car, minibus or thumb, Keele University is just off the M6 motorway, in the vicinity of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Junction 15 is the nearest exit point to both Keele University, and the Trentham Gardens camping site.

Delegates travelling by rail should go to Stoke on Trent station. The conference organizers hope to lay on transport from the station to the University, but this has not yet been finalized. Further details will be given in the pre-conference mailing to delegates.

British Rail are offering a 50% reduction on train fares to any Eco delegate travelling to the conference by rail. A special application form is being supplied to delegates by Ron Andrews. You are advised to send off your conference booking form immediately if you wish to take advantage of this offer.

VEGETARIAN FOOD

Meals will be provided at the University — please tick the appropriate boxes on the booking form. Vegetarians will also be catered for, provided Ron Andrews is given reasonable advance notice.

If you cannot afford the cost of the meals provided by the University, please feel free to bring your own food — many members prefer to do this.



THE ECOPARTY

NEC ELECTION

Eventually the main voice on the NEC will come from the 13 regionally elected representatives, but in these early days only 6 are in existence, with another four expected spawnings during the next year. This leaves 3 places on the NEC which are available to be filled on a national basis, in addition to the

RON ANDREWS

Ron Andrews is 59, a prematurely retired town-planner and a member of the N.E.C. for the past two years. As a member of the Conservation Society and a member of its National Council, he has been honorary editor of GOOD EARTH since its inception in 1974.

While firmly supporting the principle of the widest possible diffusion of political power with all decision-making conducted at the lowest practicable level, he recognises that a demonstration of its practicability is likely to be one of the Ecology Party's most difficult tasks.

He believes that the apparent conflict between administrative efficiency and decentralised power can be resolved, but it will require a break with many traditional habits of thought and some painful self-denial on the part of certain 'natural-born leaders'.

IAN BARLOW

I am 21 years old and a 5th year student of architecture at Bristol University with no special interests (I suppose that means almost anything!)

I am interested in being on next year's N.E.C. What will I bring to it? Hopefully, an informed and broadly based interest in possible and democratic processes of transition towards an ecological society. I am also concerned with ways of improving our existing building stock and rejuvenating communities — especially within our cities. It is vitally important to realize that we must be concerned with adapting existing conditions. We cannot start from scratch.

Incidentally, all the regional representatives on the N.E.C. are male. If you think, as I do, that it's important to redress the balance, vote for the women.

GUNDULA DOREY

Biologist by training, conservationist by inclination, and ecologist by conviction.

Works as a probation officer and is keenly interested in the raising of green awareness and political participation and the practical realisation of political ideals. Stood as Eco candidate in the General Election and polled 1.3% of the vote in an urban labour stronghold.

Member of the Ecology Party for 2 years and of its National Executive Committee for one. Active at branch, regional and national level, particularly in liaising with other organisations. Sees herself as contributing common sense and practical purpose to the N.E.C.

DAVID FLEMING

I would like to continue to serve on the N.E.C., where to date I have taken part in the Party's publicity and press relations: author and designer of The Reckoning, the Introduction, the national publicity leaflets, posters, stickers and ECO symbol; press secretary for the General and European Election campaigns; agent for Jonathon Porritt in the European campaign. As economics spokesman for the Party I have given a number of interviews to the press and on radio, contributed an article to the Guardian and made numerous speeches. I am on the editorial board of Econews and edit the policy page. Now completing my second year as member of the Party. I run my own small business consultancy and hate writing things like this. What else do you want to know? Recreations: Music, drinking Guinness. Single, unfortunately.

DAVID GALLANT

I am 40 with wide political experience, before resigning over

3 national places already existing. The ballot for these 6 places has been divided 4:2 between a national postal ballot, and the opportunity for talent to be voted in from the conference floor. The manifestos of the 11 candidates contesting the postal election are printed below, and a ballot paper is enclosed separately with this issue of Econews.

that other party's commitment to economic growth.

Finite resources means industrial expansion must also be limited. Instead of hailing the entrepreneur as the "creator of wealth" he should be seen as the thief who steals energy and minerals from future generations.

The unemployed are not "lazy work-shy layabouts sponging on state handouts" but the inevitable product of industrial cuts-back. Over-manning could be encouraged in the form of work-sharing schemes.

I support the small community, for example, village schools. The increase in juvenile crime is partly attributable to children feeling unwanted and "lost" in giant comprehensives. Instead of forcing people to conform with the requirements of bureaucracy, bureaucracy should be sufficiently flexible to understand the needs of the individual.

I am also a member of Friends of the Earth.

BRIAN GOODALE

If elected to the N.E.C., I would work for:

- (1) better channels of information and education, for the membership, for candidates and for voters, on all issues as seen from an ecological standpoint.
- (2) better liaison with the many sympathetic nonpolitical ecological and other groups who have solid experience in their chosen area
- (3) the understanding that we form a political party which has a highly radical economic platform but which has chosen to offer the nation its services through conventional political channels
- (4) constant repetition of the necessity for candidates in local elections, and the removal of the apparent psychological barriers to an increased level of candidacy
- (5) the building of policies that attract the mass vote without compromising the basic ecological criteria for a sustainable future
- (6) the attainment of a position in which the national media regularly turn to the Ecology Party for its opinions on the issue of the day.

LINDA M HENDRY

Spent 16 years of my life in rural Galloway, the rest in metropolitan Edinburgh. I have studied towards a stable society at all opportunities in the Hebrides, Turkish, Afghan and Himalayan villages. My M.A. includes ecology, and I have a primary teaching qualification. I work in the Edinburgh office of Gingerbread, a one parent family organization, help the Scottish Campaign to Resist the Atomic Menace, spin and weave rugs. I oppose centralization in the Ecology Party, especially an expensive London office. Favour P.R., world federal union, legalization of cannabis and fourier. Am 29, and have two daughters and a dog. I would like more emphasis on homeopathy and acupuncture in health; deschooling in education; wood and peat in energy; horses, bicycles, tricycles and steam trains in transport, and abhor the concept of defence, other than unarmed combat. I own my own home and am a member of the T.G.W.U.

BASIL MAGER

A retired Mathematics teacher, I joined Eco last October. Since January I have been Co-ordinator of the South-East (South) Region

People who join Eco have different political backgrounds; our views, at first often conflicting, need to be welded together into a harmonious, coherent whole. The Manifesto forms an excellent basis; it can best be brought up to date by an ongoing debate by correspondence, in which all

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members may participate. I have submitted details of this proposal to the N.E.C.

An immediate need is a means of issuing frequent authoritative press statements on current issues. Events daily prove the strength of our case and we should say so loud and clear.

I am especially interested in employment problems. We should place more emphasis on the enhanced quality of life which would follow if toil, leisure and wealth were all fairly shared.

JONATHON PORRITT

Over the last year my job as Vice Chairman has been to co-ordinate our election campaigns, to prepare the various drafts for the Election Manifesto and the radio and T.V. broadcasts, and to keep in contact with other environmental groups. This has enabled me to see the Party at work throughout the country, attending several Regional Conferences, and giving more than 30 speeches.

I have stood four times as a candidate for the Party: in the G.L.C. elections in 1977 (1.3%), in the local ward elections in 1978 (17%), and this year in the General Election (2.8%) and the European Election (4.1%).

All of which has confirmed my belief in the Ecology Party as a viable, independent and radical political party. In order to make the most of our successes this year, we must move fast to build a Party that is strong at every level, and firmly united in its resolve to hammer home the ecological message.

ANNE RIX

Anne Rix has been a member of ECO for 4 years. She is secretary of the East Sussex branch and stood in the Rye constituency in the general election, gaining 2.2% of the votes

there. She is a teacher of biology but has also worked as a laboratory technician, legal secretary and for a cognac firm in France. She grows her own vegetables and uses a bicycle wherever possible; but admits to enjoying driving fast cars too. Other interests include dancing, poetry, yoga, basketry, folk singing, archaeology.

From recent issues of ECONEWS, Anne feels that we are in danger of losing the Ecology out of our politics and would like to have a go at putting it back.

She is 37 and, since her family responsibilities are limited to two cats, should have plenty of time to devote to Eco business.

SALLY WILLINGTON

Sally Willington. Age 48. Self-employed Potter. Son and Daughter. Both students. Formerly of Cornwall, recently moved to London Region. Enthusiastic member of Party since 1973. Elected to N.E.C. 1977. National Secretary '77-'78 and '78-'79.

Having helped to found organisation of our rapidly growing Party, would like to "finish the job" and see establishment of all 13 Regions and Organisers before 1980 Conference — by which time most members should have a branch to belong to.

While believing that the strength of the Party is in its branches, firmly says that there must be an elected central body (the N.E.C.) to deal with the business of the Party and to speak on behalf of the whole Party at World leadership level. Ours must be a World-wide movement — starting in our own backyards.

We are doing something quite new and extraordinary; it is difficult but we must succeed.



This year's National Executive Committee, the body to which the candidates above aspire. Standing (left to right): Ron Andrews, Steve Lambert (London rep), David Taylor (South West rep), John Foster (North West rep), Jonathon Porritt (Vice Chairman), John Davenport, Peter Draper (South East rep), Peter Sizer (Treasurer), David Fleming (Press Officer). Middle row: Keith Rushworth (Yorks and Humberside rep), Gundula Dorey, Sally Willington (National Secretary). Bottom row: Jeremy Faulk (Policy Co-ordinator), Jonathan Tyler (Chairman), Teddy Goldsmith. Absent from picture: Leslie Spoor, Biff Vernon, John Luck, John Wareing.

Programme

FRIDAY 7TH SEPTEMBER

- 1.00 Lunch
- 2.00 Annual General Meeting/NEC Reports.
- 4.00 Tea
- 4.30 Policy Formulation: NEC recommendations.
- 6.30 Supper
- 8.30 Defence policy debate: paper prepared by the Edinburgh branch.
- 10.00 Bar opens.

SATURDAY 8TH SEPTEMBER

- 9.00 Debate on the Party's Constitution and Structure.
- 10.45 Coffee
- 11.15 Land policy debate: paper prepared by joint

- Conservation Society/Eco working party.
- 12.45 Lunch
- 2.00 Seminar: Richard Holme on 'Electoral Reform – the shape of democracy to come'.
- 4.00 Tea
- 4.30 Debate on the Party's Constitution and Structure.
- 6.00 Supper
- 8.30 Guest Speaker: Petra Kelly
- 10.00 Music! Guy Woodford's Acton Beauchamp Stompers.

SUNDAY 9TH SEPTEMBER

- 9.30 Employment policy debate
- 11.00 Coffee
- 11.30 Energy policy debate: paper prepared by the Sussex branch.
- 12.45 Lunch
- 2.00 Elections, Resolutions, and Open Forum.
- 4.00 Tea

Booking form

Please reserve places at conference for
 (names) as indicated below.

| | Cost | Persons | £ |
|-----------------------|------------------|---------|---|
| Friday lunch | £1.65 per person | | |
| Friday session fee | £1.00 per person | | |
| Friday supper | £2.25 per person | | |
| Friday/Saturday B & B | £5.50 per person | | |
| Saturday session fee | £1.00 per person | | |
| Saturday lunch | £1.65 per person | | |
| Saturday supper | £2.25 per person | | |
| Saturday/Sunday B & B | £5.50 per person | | |
| Sunday session fee | £1.00 per person | | |
| Sunday lunch | £1.65 per person | | |

Please find enclosed cheque/P.O. for

- I will require vegetarian meals.
- I will be using the "dependent" camping facility.
- I would like to be picked up at Stoke station. (Please state arrival time of your train).

Signed Name

Address

Return this form, with cheque made out to 'Ecology Party' to Ron Andrews, 18 Cofton Lake Road, Rednal, Birmingham 45.

GREEN POLITICS

Values Party changes direction

New Zealand's ecological party, 'Values', has passed a major turning point in its development. Following an unexpected election humiliation, the party has adopted a distinctly socialist strategy statement, and decided to more or less eschew national electoral politics in favour of grass roots community action.

The change of direction followed a serious setback in the November 1978 general election, when their share of the poll slumped from the 5.5% achieved in 1975, to just over 2%. In part, this can be attributed to tactical voting — a strong swing against the extreme right wing National Party considerably eroded the Values vote — and to a surprise upsurge by the previously insignificant Social Credit Party. But the poor result also inflamed the divisions within Values between the 'socialist' and 'non socialist' wings of the Party, and led to bitter internal recriminations. Some members claimed that the election result was an inevitable consequence of the failure of Values to campaign on a socialist platform, while others opposed any attempt to adulterate the Party's ecological philosophy.

The Party's annual conference in May 1979 achieved a balance between the two factions by electing a mixed socialist/non socialist executive, but went on to overwhelmingly adopt a socialist strategy statement. This statement, by John Stewart, was described by a delegate as "one of the most important things ever done for this party", and amounts to a major reappraisal of Values ideology and tactics. An edited version is printed below.

"Since April 1977 the Values Party has been sliding steadily towards political obscurity. Those political journalists who have bothered to comment on the Party have tended to suggest that the movement is suffering from some form of terminal illness. Since November 25th, the Party's steady decline has gathered additional momentum. The prognostications of the journalists and our political opponents are being substantiated.

The first step in planning the revival of a demoralised and uncertain organisation is the drawing up of a statement of objectives. Vague and unrealistic affirmations about becoming the government of the day are both irrelevant and unrealistic. How can the Values Party talk coherently and convincingly about becoming the government of the day when it has 2.5% of the popular vote, about one thousand members and two

hundred activists and no clear unity of belief or purpose? Clearly it will lack credibility in the public mind as long as it continues to pretend it is anything else than a very minor political party. The problem confronting the Values Party has a lot to do with the debasement of politics in New Zealand — the politics of expediency, the politics of either winning or losing elections; in other words, politicking, a rather shady and manipulative activity which has produced a cynical and largely apathetic public and an almost totally alienated society. Effectively the Values Party has to be seen to be outside this definition of politics.

The Values Party grew out of the ecological movement, it is an ecologically-based party, it has an ecologically-based philosophy. The fundamental concepts inherent in ecology are interdependence and the notion of limits. Indeed, the essential message of ecology is limitation — there is only so much the biosphere can take and only so much it can give and this may be less than the human species desires. Given the reality of ecological scarcity it is my view and, I believe, that of the Values Party that the ground has been cut from under the present political and economic systems, making merely reformist policies of ecological management all but useless.

Put in another way the Values Party's call for a democratic, co-operative, community-based and sustainable socio-economic system cannot be realised within the framework of an exploitative, increasingly bureaucratic, growth orientated and increasingly authoritarian capitalist world. Nor can it be realised in the exploitative, increasingly bureaucratic, growth orientated Communist regimes of the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe. The Values Party's call for a humanistic and ecologically-based society is both an explicit and an implicit challenge to the holders of power, the power brokers of our society. They will not surrender their positions of authority and power without a sharp and bitter struggle. Sweet words of reason will not even rattle the gates of capitalist and bureaucratic power.

It is within this context that the strategy proposals contained in my January paper should be understood. The democratic, co-operative, just and sustainable society is a socialist society — a socialist society in the humanist tradition, a socialist society based on sound ecological principles. Consequently there is no way in which the Values Party can be true to its basic principles and the implications of its worldview if it moves to accept a

viewpoint based on individualism, competition and capitalism — a viewpoint which rejects the notions of interdependence and co-operation and limits, and which rejects the necessity of giving institutional expression to these concepts.

Proposals

Given the ideological viewpoint expressed above I have amended my January 1979 proposals as follows:

1. The Values Party's primary aim must be consciousness raising. All political and educational activities — either local community action, national level initiatives or seminars/workshops etc. — should be planned with that objective in mind. Furthermore, this proposal is based on the principle that networking, community political action, and educational seminars provide the key to the increasing membership, broadening the Party's social catchment area and improving its financial position.

2. The Party should move away from politicking, from viewing political activity in terms of winning and losing elections, and attempting to manipulate public opinion in favour of some short term panacea. In other words, the Party should change its emphasis from electoral politics at any level to action and educative politics at local and national level, especially in the fields of resource depletion, environmental spoliation, the exploitation of people and nature, the human waste and social cost of unemployment, and community health and welfare, and sexual discrimination.

3. (a) Values Party activists, in accordance with a nationally determined plan, should strengthen contacts and work with other groups calling for a redistribution of wealth and power and the establishment of a truly socialist humanist society.

(b) a key element of this action programme would be support for the development of various networks — Maori land activists, Trade Union progressives, Women's rights groups, peace groups and environmentalists.

4. The decision to contest elections at either national or local body level should be made on the basis of whether or not such involvement would aid the advancement of the Values attitudes, views and policies. In brief, elections should be regarded as a means to an end not as an end in themselves. Nevertheless, particular value is seen in local body involvement and consequently the Party

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LETTERS

The need for genuine decentralization

27 Canadian Avenue
Gillingham
Kent

Dear Econews,

I would like to add my contribution to the debates concerning decentralization and the left-right axis.

1. Decentralization

(a) This was discussed at the last North Kent branch committee meeting, specifically in relation to the new membership system. Our Acting Secretary, Celia Keane, felt that the seven pages of duplicated instructions on form-filling which she had just received amounted to bureaucratic lunacy, and we all agreed. Jim Tidy (who is experienced in these matters, being secretary of the West Kent branch of USDAW, the shop workers' union), pointed out that neither the Labour Party nor the Conservative Party keeps central membership records at all, this being left to the branches, who affiliate to the national party. So far as the Conservative Party is concerned, this was confirmed by our treasurer, Bernard Morris, whose sister is a Conservative Party official and who had informed him that the Con. Party does not even require a statutory subscription from its members, though a donation on enrolment is encouraged.

Our discussion ended with general agreement that membership should not be centrally recorded; that it is crazy for a decentralist party to operate a system that is actually more centralised than the major parties; and that steps should be taken to rectify this situation as soon as possible, though we did not feel sufficient confidence to make a proposal along these lines in the form of a resolution for Conference.

I would like to add my personal view to this, which is that the office of National Membership Secretary should be abolished immediately, with branches having responsibility for their own membership records and processing. First enquiries could be sent to the National Secretary, who would simply acknowledge them and forward them to the branches concerned, or, in areas where no branches existed, to the Regional Organisers.

(b) Decentralization is an essential element of Eco philosophy and should be an integral part of our practice. But its effectiveness is conditional on people being willing to take responsibility at branch and regional level. The problems experienced in trying to achieve this are formidable. The rejection by the SE Regional Conference of Kent's motion to set up an embryo regional organisation to which the Regional Organiser should be responsible has been followed by the development of creeping centralism in the Region, as in the party as a whole. This matters. The EP is coming under fire from anarchists for this very reason. I have personally experienced anarchist attacks from three different quarters, and I think they should be taken very seriously.

At the Kent inaugural meeting in Maidstone last year, Mike Page expressed criticism of the EP from an anarchist/decentralist viewpoint, arguing that by virtue of its constitution as a political organisation with an internal power-structure, the EP would be corrupted by centralistic power. This kind of criticism was later expressed, in at least one case very vehemently indeed, at the Schumacher Society Colloquium which I attended at Cardiff, with Satish Kumar in the chair. Closer to home, Ken Smith, who is a lecturer at the University of Kent and who is an active influence with the local FOE and the Alternatives Research Group at the university, recently wrote to me enclosing some quotations from Malatesta (which were already on my shelves, incidentally), and telling me that he had been able to persuade five people who had intended to join the EP not to do so, on the basis of this kind of argument. As you will realise, five people, if active, can make a powerful impact at local level.

The development of centralistic tendencies in our organisation gives fuel to this kind of attack, as do statements like that made by the late Dr John Beale at the SE Regional Conference in Guildford that the party needed "a strong leader".

It is absolutely vital that genuinely decentralist forms of internal administration be achieved by the EP — and the precondition of this is willingness to accept responsibility for our own lives and our own moral decisions, and not to push these responsibilities onto "leader figures".

(c) Genuine decentralization of membership processing would reduce the need for a Central office, which ought not to be proceeded with at this stage. It would also reduce the proportion of expenses needed by the central organisation. The membership fee of £4 is currently

split £3 for the centre, £1 for the branch. This should be reversed. The branch should take £3, the centre should take only £1.

2. The Left/Right Axis

"Left" and "Right" are obsolete categories in the context of ecopolitics. We face not a crisis of capitalism but the terminal crisis of industrialism. The battle between Left and Right is a sterile battle between industrial workers and industrial managers for control of the industrial machine. It has no relevance in the post-industrial situation. We must be clear-headed about this: parties of the "Right" and "Left" are parties of the past. Eco is the party of the future. If you want to be a Green Socialist, join SERA.

Sincerely,

Colin Fry

Planet before class!

135 Warren Drive,
Hornchurch,
Essex

Dear Sir,

Let us please retain the political disclaimer "neither of the left or right" in any literature that I can use for mass circulation in my area: otherwise I shall add it in myself!

The adjective "left" is discredited. It may still appear to mean something in *Time Out*, but on the doorstep it has been made meaningless by the double standards that socialists have always applied to what they regard as class issues, regularly excusing greed in the working class, while criticising it in the ruling class (as it once was). Yet there can be no one down my street who does not know that the most significant "tory" in this country is Joe Gormley, and I for one would be pleasantly surprised to hear that the labour movement was going to support the ideal of lower consumption! Anyway, how many left wing parties are there: five? ten? I've lost count. I don't relish going to the trouble of building up the eleventh.

Planet before class please! The Ecology Party has serious work to do. We cannot afford to be confused in the public mind with yet another suicide-fantasy party for the conscience-stricken former bourgeoisie.

Yours truly,

Philippe Epps

LETTERS

Ecology and the radical socialist tradition

1 Lupton Street,
London NW5

Dear Editor,

As a very recent recruit to the Party I'm afraid I didn't see Stephen Twine's letter in the May Newsletter, but I feel that some of the replies to his letter raised points that need to be answered.

Firstly, it seems to me that both Mike Landon and Robin Smith share the most remarkable degree of naivety about the implications of Eco politics. For example, Mike Landon says that 'Ecologists do not condemn free enterprise per se.' Ignoring the use of that particularly glutinous euphemism, 'free enterprise', one has to ponder on how the earth and its inhabitants came to their current condition; plundered and exploited, starved, bullied and slaughtered. Is the rape of our planet and the pollution of our environment an accident? No it has been done deliberately, and done in the interests of profit. Thus it would seem to me that Eco politics are fundamentally anti-capitalist, whether it is the multi-nationals of the West or the State-Capitalism of the East.

Secondly, when Robin Smith says that '... we are not interested in solutions to problems within the context of a society

and danger to life and health that this entails. we see as inherently unstable and running out of time' I get the horrible feeling that I am seeing an action replay of the self-destruction of the early socialist movement in this country in the 1880's and 90's when, by its refusal to concern itself with 'reformists' issues like the struggle for shorter working hours and better conditions, it left the way open for the Fabians, the grey architects of today's bureaucratic welfare capitalism. If the Ecology Party does not concern itself with ALL the problems ordinary people face today, from the public spending cuts to Northern Ireland to the campaign for a zebra crossing in the high street, then we will continue to be 'everybody's second choice', a party which few people take seriously as anything more than just another environmental pressure group. We must seek to become the natural home for radicals and dissenters of all kinds, as the Labour Party one was (a very long time ago). We must become THE party of protest.

For example, we cannot ignore the fact that the government now in power is probably the most callous and reactionary for a generation. Is it not the anti-thesis of all we believe in? Should we not, therefore, become involved in any and all popular campaigns against its policies

and press for our policies within them?

Finally, it seems to me that all your correspondents, with the possible exception of Tom Osborne, seem to think that the politics of the Ecology Party have sprung fully formed from out of nowhere. I believe that this view is quite wrong — there is a quite clearly discernable radical socialist tradition in this country and that the Ecology Party is an extension of that tradition in the light of modern conditions. This democratic and libertarian tradition, stretching from the Diggers and 'True Levellers' through the Chartists and Co-operative pioneers to modern socialists (each in different circumstances) like Gandhi and Luther King can be summed up in a quote from a pioneer of Eco-politics, William Morris:

'What I mean by Socialism is a condition of society in which there should be neither rich nor poor, neither master nor master's man, neither idle nor over-worked, neither brain-sick brain workers nor heart-sick hand workers, in a word, in which all men would be living in equality of condition, and would manage their affairs unwastefully, and with full consciousness that harm to one would mean harm to all — the realization at last of the meaning of the word COMMONWEALTH.'

Best wishes,

Sean Thompson

Abortion: a woman's right to choose

Nacton
Ipswich

Dear Friend,

I am rather surprised that anyone should think of forcing a woman to bear an unwanted child as a long-term solution to a real problem. I certainly agree that fertility control is better than abortion, but it is misleading to refer to a foetus as a child. In the early stages it is no more than a potential child — an egg is not a chicken!

We are already desperately overcrowded. Surely it is no solution to force people to give birth to more children who have less chance of the loving home which all children should have.

Most women feel they have the right to decide whether or not to have a child so if the law is repressive, they will resort to the back streets, with all the misery

and danger to life and health that this entails.

I would certainly think that a liberal policy on abortion was more in line with other eco-policies, decentralisation, caring for people as individuals, concern about overcrowding, etc.

Yours sincerely,

Lydia Vulliamy

Silver St House
Bradford-on-Avon
Wiltshire

Dear Sir,

I was angered and disturbed by Rosanna Summer's letter in Econews no. 3, which brought to mind the sort of reasoning that supported those who condemned suicide as a sin and homosexuality as a crime.

The problem of abortion is one which involves the parent(s) alone, sometimes in consultation with medical advisers. To place it under the wings of political ideology is ludicrous as is the ultimate goal of educating women sufficiently to control their own fertility, that R. Summers quotes. The most thinking of

people may make mistakes.

Of course we can actively 'reject brutality and the oppression of the weak' and the law may play an important part in many such instances; but abortion? The unborn foetus has a pretty undeveloped brain and sensory cycle in its first three months and its suffering would be negligible compared to that of the infant born into an uncertain home, or to a lifetime of disability, even if the world should accept imperfection without a blush, as R. Summers hopes.

I have known the distress of having an abortion, but had it been illegal or had it required surreptitious and guilty manoeuvres to obtain, the pain would have been far greater.

The great majority of abortions are not carelessly decided upon nor are they frequently regretted afterwards. Obviously there is always some regret in the permanent memory and some deal of suffering. Some women suffer irredeemably, but for the sake of this implicit human right and freedom, casualties will occur.

Yours sincerely,

Alice Naish

LETTERS

No precedent

Hailey
Witney, Oxon

Dear Sir,

In ECONEWS 2 Edward Goldsmith states his own approach to the problems of adapting to increasing scarcity in three sentences which I think are important because they represent the ideas of many people in ECO.

'We are all concerned in trying to work out what sort of society *we would like to create* out of the ruins of industrialism. (My italics)

'It has always been my theme that one could not simply postulate a hypothetical society of which there was no historical precedent. One has first of all to look at the past and see the sort of societies which proved to be viable'.

But we are not free to create the sort of society we should like even if we can find the right precedents. There are no precedents for what we have to do. The process of history which lies behind us and has produced our problems has abolished the conditions of the past.

The basic determinant of the shape any society can take is the proportion of land and natural resources to the number of men and their accumulated tools. Since the beginning of agriculture history has increased the number of people from (probably) less than a million to over 4 billion, and in the process reduced the unused resources and natural fertility of the earth. The ratio of men plus capital to land has increased and is still rising. We are faced with a completely new situation in which historical precedents have little to offer us.

The only choice we may have is about the way we adapt our billions to increasing scarcity. We can make an effort now to devise ways of adapting our activities by democratic means which will promote the mutual consideration of all nations, groups and individuals for each other's needs. If we do not choose to do this while we still have time we shall ultimately be forced to accept the dictatorships which will emerge to subdue the social strife which will increase as energy and food run out.

The greatest difference between the future and the past is that no society we could devise could enjoy enough space to be free from the pressures of the rest of mankind on themselves and

New tax system

6 Huntingdon Street
Bradford-on-Avon
Wilts

Dear Sir,

The National Incomes scheme might be brilliant theoretically, but — apart from creating an outside credibility gap for the ECO Party — I believe it would founder on the human factor if it were put to the test. For a start, assured of a basic minimum income, thousands (millions?) would leave their boring, unpleasant jobs, claim they were unemployed, and then take freelance work where no PAYE was deducted. Those obliged to remain in orthodox employment would be carrying all those moonlighters on their backs.

A far more efficient and fundamental way of establishing basic justice would seem to be the Land Value Taxation scheme, ie. taxing the un-improved or bare value of land — the site itself according to its annual rental value. L.V.T. is part of the Liberal Party policy, but they are pretty reticent about it. I would like to see the ECO Party take it up and get it instituted. Land is the one fundamental "possession" on which we depend for everything we need. If it were more expensive to hold on to (as an L.V.T. tax would make it), increasing amounts of land would come back on the market

their environment.

The most hopeful way of regulating the pressures and leaving large areas of freedom within the essential framework of restriction lies in the creation of a range of democratic authorities varying from world regulatory bodies down to small groups and families, which fit and work smoothly one within the other.

Some things have to be regulated on a global scale, especially everything that affects the climate of the earth and the use of the sea. We cannot risk such pollution of the sea that the oxygen producing plankton are all killed off.

The size of the next largest sub global organisations will depend to a great extent on the way in which we solve our energy problems. The domination of the world by large area organisations, the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R., the creation of the E.E.C. and the tendency of China to increasing centralisation under Ten Hsiaoping is the result of the scale of armaments made possible by our present technology and energy supplies. The E.E.C. arose

at continually reducing prices, and so become available to those wanting to buy houses, smallholdings, and/or become self-employed. In easy stages over a ten-year period L.V.T could take the place of most other taxes — e.g. income tax, dividends tax and VAT — which would encourage a great upsurge in individual enterprise, investment and jobs in small-scale commerce and industry.

This is a basically just tax because it does not tax individual effort and enterprise, but collects for the community the values the community creates by its combined efforts. Obviously certain categories of land would need special protection — agricultural, woodland, wilderness, National Trust Properties, etc., but this would in no way conflict with the scheme. I also suspect that non-nationals should be limited to owning a modest acreage so that us natives were not out-bid and deprived of the benefits of decreasing land prices.

The style of taxation propounded is one of the cornerstones of any political party's policies. But to draw up a competent scheme to replace the amazing complexity of today's tax system is surely a job for experts in the field. May I suggest that the Ecology Party set up a Working Party to carry out this job.

Yours sincerely,
Susan Coppard

out of the iron and steel Federation and Euratom in face of the power of Russia to the East.

It new sources of energy like atomic fusion are devised on a very large scale these great areas of authority will tend to be consolidated. If we reach adequate small scale solutions instead atomic weaponry will decay and smaller areas of authority will emerge. The optimum size of the sub-global areas will become smaller and the E.E.C. will fall apart.

The rapid promotion of small scale solutions to the energy problem is probably the most important thing we can do to reduce the size of viable communities in the future.

Small communities can only be attained within the framework of large organisations for the regulation of world problems. Political ecology must be concerned with the problems produced by over four billion people pressing on the earth's resources. If ECO is to be a political party it must consider them.

Yours sincerely,
Margaret Laws Smith

REVIEWS

Person~Planet: an ethical connection

Person/Planet; The Creative Disintegration of Industrial Culture.

by Theodore Roszak, Gollancz 1979, £5.95

As we live through the declining years of the industrial age, perhaps the single most promising possibility that lies ahead is that we can, as a society, begin to free ourselves from the neurotic compulsions of endless material growth and instead begin to devote more of our time and energy to exploring and developing the many varieties of qualitative human growth. Easy to say of course, infinitely harder to do. Yet those who are familiar with Roszak's earlier work (and other such writings) will know that this process has in fact already started to occur. With this new volume, Roszak takes a closer look at these tendencies, re-evaluates their role in cultural change and puts forward a pertinent, if audacious, thesis, which attempts to link individual experience with the ultimate well-being of the planet.

The thesis is simply stated, its ramifications less so. "The needs of the planet are the needs of the person. And, therefore, the rights of the planet are the rights of the person." As it stands this is problematic. But Roszak elaborates the theme throughout this impressive book and shows, at least to my satisfaction, that respect for persons and ecological sanity may well go hand in hand. Roszak dismisses those theories which attempt to fit people into pre-ordained conceptual boxes (a practice he rightly condemns as "mystification"), and instead suggests

that we work to create the conditions that will allow people to grow to full personhood. All else follows on from this. He writes, "if we work to deepen people's sense of personal worth, strengthen their natural instinct for spiritual growth, augment their citizenly need to participate in the institutions that govern their lives, then they will find within themselves the most delicate gauge of ecologically intelligent scale". It is an optimistic proposition that rests ultimately on a faith in the moral and spiritual capacities of ordinary people. Yet neither is it blindly unrealistic for the author is clearly aware of what is involved.

It is up to each of us to evaluate books like this according to our own experience, but it seems to me that what Roszak is suggesting here may perhaps be described as a kind of permanent ethical work-to-rule. That is, a stance whereby each of us refuses to accept the under-dimensioned categories bequeathed to us by reductionist science and the industrial system, and refuses also to impose them on others. The adoption of such a commitment on the part of sufficient numbers of people would indeed signal a shift towards a more human and ecologically viable culture, the kind of culture, indeed, that I am sure ECO would heartily endorse.

The value and originality of the book resides less in its information content than in the masterly way the author has cut through a great deal of superfluous detail and drawn together an argument that not only illuminates the dilemmas of the contemporary world but also carries us significantly forward. Reading it is rather like viewing a cartographic masterpiece upon which, by

virtue of the quality of illustration, familiar features are revealed anew and new relationships suddenly emerge. Armed with such a map, it is possible to locate oneself more clearly within the shifting contours of our culture. True, there are ambiguities, stretches of coastline that we must examine more carefully. But the overall conclusions are quite clear: "there is no way" Roszak writes, "to build the good society from the top down." Instead of "brainstorming blueprints . . . we would do better to concentrate on the living experience of personhood." What is required is a shift to "a new kind of bigness . . . an inner bigness . . . the adventure of self-discovery. The larger that grows, the more lightly human society will rest upon the Earth."

Despite the fact that, to the best of my knowledge, there is as yet no paperback edition of Person/Planet, I hope that many people will be able to read the book and consider its message carefully. Some of the ideas in the Ecology Movement have strong authoritarian overtones and it is important to assess these alongside what is, to my mind, a far more promising approach.

Richard A. Slaughter

Matriarchy

The Politics of Matriarchy: Matriarchy Study Group, Flat 6, 15 Guildford Street, London, WC1 £1.10 inc. postage.

The Women's Lib movement has made us aware of the discrimination against women in our present society, but runs the danger of mistakenly using male criteria, and attempting to become pseudo-men, in order to compete against them. The Matriarchy Study Group has very little in common with the more strident 'Women's Libbers' because it is concerned with a far more fundamental change of values: towards holism rather than analysis; co-operation rather than competition; consensus rather than leadership. They point out that men are essentially good at techniques and study of isolated details, and are usually not concerned with the relationship of their own speciality to the whole of reality, the capacity for which demands intuition. As Robert Graves puts it: "Man does, Woman is".

This is a very stimulating collection of essays, poems and pictures which could well change your whole way of thinking/feeling about life into a more truly ecological one - though 'logic' is another male concept which might be rejected!

Richard Carder

Values Party

should continue to stand candidates in local body elections. wealth and power".

Margaret Crozier, the new Values leader, clarifies their position: "To me . . . socialism should be understanding the need to work with people where they are directly involved, and not adopting a pious, parliamentary stance of 'wait until we're in power' . . . We are in a socialist tradition where the community at large must have effective control over the activities of large scale economic organisations. There is control at the moment that is centralized, ad hoc, not properly ecologically based, and ineffective . . . The other area which puts us firmly on the left must be a commitment to reduce inequalities, not increase them, hence our strong positions on the redistribution of

Now, three months after the conference, Values is beginning to recover its composure. The divisions within the party are being openly discussed in a spirit of reconciliation, and differences resolved - with the result that the party is emerging with a stronger sense of unity and purpose than before. Pledges (regular donations) are up by 600% on this time last year, and morale in the branches is high. The Values Party appears to be safely over a major ideological hurdle on their road to further success. The same hurdle is already looming up on the Ecology Party's horizon - their experience may be of assistance to us.

Peter Frings

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CAMPAIGN MATERIAL

The following items are available from ECO, PO Box 30, Norwich.

- Election posters: 12p each.
General posters: 12p each.
A5 Publicity leaflets: 50p per 100.
Introduction to the Party leaflets: £1.00 per 50. (Includes registration forms.)
Registration forms: 25p per 50.
Stickers: 14p per sheet of 6.
A4 Letterheaded paper: £1.00 per 100 sheets.
A5 Letterheaded paper: 80p per 100 sheets.
A6 Letterheaded paper: 60p per 100 sheets.
1" Badges: 8p each.
1 1/2" Badges: 10p each.
1 3/4" Badges: 15p each.
The Real Alternative: 15p each.
European Election Manifesto: 12p each.
The Reckoning: 20p each.
The Little Green Book: A tenant's manual to the planet. (Produced by Vole for the Green Alliance usual price £1): 70p.

For orders over £1.00, postage and packing is free. For orders less than £1.00, please include 10p.

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