

ecology party

newsletter

JULY/AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1978

No. 5 (new series)

WAKE UP TO OUR PARLIAMENTARY BIRTH!!

The Ecology Party could be on the threshold of making a serious impact on the electorate of this country at the forthcoming election...but to do that we need tons of enthusiasm, commitment to hard work and the use of a lot of spare time, the wholehearted seeking of donations, gifts and loans from anyone, but particularly the well-heeled organisation or individual, and the holding of money-raising events and the creation of a non-active but financially contributing membership (in addition to the active members) - we have not much time if the General Election happens in October, as now seems most likely

We need to EXPLODE our membership, to infiltrate all quarters with publicity to persuade notable people that our views are worth looking at, and get them to say so publicly

We need to create - urgently - more branches or organised groups who will be capable of sustaining an election campaign in their constituency, and who can then find themselves a candidate to stand at the General Election. At the moment we have just reached double figures for candidates - and we can manage 50 - even perhaps 100!

Although the time may be very short and resources very meagre, we need to make this all out attempt to register ourselves with the electorate because we may not have the opportunity again for another five years, and by that time it may be too late to save the country from chaos

Making an impact in the European Parliament elections of 7 June, 1979, is unlikely, and, in any case, is so distant from the U.K. as to have little effect. One may rest assured that our Commons - if there has been no appreciable impact by us - will dismiss any ecological effort that a European Parliament might make...No, that is not the way - we must concentrate on our election.

As David Woodhams (chairer) says 'If the New Zealand Values Party is to continue to be a really effective force for change, then it must be totally serious in its quest for power'

We must be just as committed as the quotation implies: the Values Party was founded in 1972; also in 1972 it contested 44 out of the 87 seats in the elections that year for New Zealand's Parliament and gained 1.8% of the total votes cast for all seats; in 1975, with a candidate for each of the 87 seats, they gained 5.2%. This year there is another election, and, although the number of seats has been raised to 93, there will be a candidate for each seat. At the moment we have a maximum of 11 candidates!

And one way in which we can show to a very practical degree our support of our movement is to attend the Annual General Meeting and Annual Conference at Birmingham on September 8, 9 and 10; it will impress the media and, at one and the same time, provide a means of the membership expressing its views of where and how the Party should be going

WE MUST MAKE THIS AN ECOLOGY PARTY YEAR - PERHAPS EVEN
THE FIRST ECOLOGY PARTY MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT!!

THE SOUTH WEST POLICY CONFERENCE

Organised by: David Taylor
Chaired by: Tony Whittaker
Participants: David Fleming (economy)
John Sullivan (education)
Ian Hatwell (foreign affairs and defence)

Nestling at the gate of the South West of England, not a bow's shot from Temple Meads Station, there is a little patch of land scooped out of the natural concrete. Motorways and flyovers do not run past it; by a curious freak of nature they run above it; they embrace it, and fondle it, and purr contentedly round it. In the middle of this sweet scene there stands a pub. And in it, on Saturday 17 June, forty Eco members met to talk. Some said it was for fun.

The three subjects for discussion were economics, education and foreign affairs. David Fleming led the debate on economics with an outline of immediate prospects for the British economy, and of the signs that a deep international recession will set in with the next ten years. He examined the implications of the recession on Britain's ability to import essential food and raw materials. 'Self-sufficiency in energy,' he said, 'is already widely accepted in politics as an acceptable and necessary objective. Soon the accepted meaning of self-sufficiency will have to expand to include a very much broader range of goods and materials.'

The two debates of the afternoon were most valuable as a means of illustrating the breadth of view within the party on subjects which (although they may be in the front rank of importance) are not in the front rank of the Party's priorities. Virtually everyone in the Party would agree, in broad outline at least, about the case for a stable society, about agricultural policy, reduced consumption, less materialist values and devolution. But that still leaves considerable scope for debate about education, foreign affairs, defence and unilateral and multilateral disarmament; and on a subject more or less unconnected with the principle of the stable society - such as the closed shop, for instance - there is

no reason why Eco-members should show more consensus than a group of people drawn at random from right across the political spectrum

It is very important that we should recognise the difference between the subjects on which we can agree straight away, and those on which we can't; that we should understand and respect each other's arguments; that we should not allow full-blooded discussion of this kind to blunt our agreement on the prime task of establishing a sane society; and that we should make time to test the areas of agreement and disagreement as often as possible

The Bristol Conference did these things, and should therefore be counted as a success. There was some disappointment that it did not give birth to 'resolutions' of various kinds on the subjects discussed. But perhaps that would have dragged the day down into bureaucracy and business, and called for a spirit of compromise from which, as it stood, the day was mercifully free. It was an opportunity for members to discover what the Party is really about, and to make a contribution to its thinking at the same time.

So congratulations and thanks to David Taylor and the South West Region for setting it up. And if any other group is thinking of doing the same, I think the advice is 'Go Ahead!'

David Fleming

AVON AND SOMERSET BRANCH

During the last few weeks the Branch has had two fund-raising events: a Jumble Sale which raised about £25, and a stall at Bath Round Table's 'Jamboree', which raised a further £10.

On 17 June the Branch hosted a South West Region policy conference at Bristol, the proceedings of which are reported elsewhere in this Newsletter.

At the Branch meeting on 4 July it was decided by a majority vote to try and find a candidate to fight the next General Election in the Bath constituency. The meeting was informed that the N.E.C. are prepared to make a donation towards election expenses. Nevertheless, the Branch would have to raise about £200.

Monthly meetings continue to be held on the first Tuesday of every month at the 'Ring 'o Bells', Widcombe, Bath. It is hoped that these will take the form of discussions. Meetings will also be held on the third Tuesday of every month at 51 Kipling Avenue, Bath, to attend to Branch business.

SOUTH WEST ANTI-NUCLEAR GROUPS CONTACTS

Peter Frings has done a terrific job on this information source, with a list of contacts for individuals and groups in the five counties that make up the region. It is available from him at: 3 Mowbray Avenue, Exeter EX4 4HB. There is no charge, but he would welcome at least the postage cost, and would not be averse to receiving more!

THE FOUNDERS

It was decided by the N.E.C. that the following should be regarded as founding branches of the Party:

LEEDS

Secretary: KEITH RUSHWORTH, 8 The Mount, Alwoodley,
Leeds 17, W. Yorks. 0532 672198

Membership: CRIM RUSHWORTH

BIRMINGHAM SOUTH

Chairperson: BRENDA TYLER, 121 Selly Park Road,
Birmingham 29, W. Midlands B29 7HY 021 472 1088

Membership: JOE BENETT, 59 Selly Park Road,
Birmingham 29, W. Midlands B29 7HY 021 472 2406

NORFOLK and NORWICH

Secretary: RON SPATHAKY, 31 Meadow Rise Road, Norwich
Norfolk NR2 3QE 0603 501791

Treasurer: GEORGE HANNAH, Flat 1, 217 Unthank Road, Norwich
Norfolk

GREATER LONDON

Secretary & Membership: JEAN LAMBERT, 3 Howard Road, London E.17
01 520 0676

KENT

Membership: FREDERICK CLARK, 43 Peartree Avenue, Ditton
Maidstone, Kent

EAST SUSSEX

Membership: SHERRY HOEVELMANN, 2 Summertree Cottages,
Bodle Street Green, Herstmonceaux, E. Sussex

AVON and SOMERSET

Chairman: DON GRIMES, 51 Kipling Avenue, Bath, Avon
0225 29146

Membership: THELMA GRIMES

BOURNEMOUTH and EAST DORSET

Chairman & Membership: IAN HATWELL, 20 Spring Road, Bournemouth, Dorset

DEVON

Chairman & Membership: PETER FRINGS, 3 Mowbray Avenue, Exeter, Devon
0392 52857

PENZANCE and WEST CORNWALL

Chairman & Membership: HOWARD HOPTROUGH, 5 Morrab Terrace, Penzance
Cornwall 0736 4880

NORWICH AIRPORT PUBLIC INQUIRY

Robert Waller, writer and broadcaster and a founder member of the Norwich and Norfolk Branch of 'eco', is giving evidence at this inquiry. All power to his elbow - the lobby against this project is very strong and it may be that it will be stopped.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Howard Hoptrough

The 'Observer' article by Solly Zuckerman (as referred to in the May E.P. Newsletter under 'Points for Discussion') is, I suggest a welcome indication that Ecologists, unlike Liberals have an opposable identity

The Conservative Party receives substantial support from those who support anti-Labour policies, as does the Labour Party from those who support anti-Conservative policies. The Liberal Party, not having an opposable identity of its own, is not recognised as being both anti-Labour and anti-Conservative

The ruling Parties seek to sustain their positions by pursuing objectives which are aggregates of those of individual community members, and they attempt to minimize the risk of losing their positions by making little or no effort to change individual objectives. The aggregates being quite unattainable, the ruling Parties are becoming less and less relevant to the life of the community, whose integrity is threatened by a growing power vacuum

A fundamental belief of any political party must be that people do benefit by living as members of a community. Political parties differ in their appreciation of what the benefits can and should be. But when they also believe that to effect the choice of community objectives, it is first necessary to gain and retain power, real power always eludes them

With the formation of the Ecology Party there is, at last, some hope of filling the power gap, but if we seek power by adopting policies designed to attract majority support (as has been advocated by Keith Rushworth), inevitably those policies will be similar to those of the ruling parties, and we shall merely contribute to the community's disintegration

Our job must be to persuade the community that it is pursuing unrealistic objectives, and to offer viable alternatives. A campaign strategy which effectively conveys our message will bring us to power. But decisions about strategy should not affect the nature of the message

Yours sincerely

Laurence Thompson

THE WADEBRIDGE WEEKEND

A conclave of committee bound E.P. members collected cautiously in craggy Cornwall a weekend or two ago and talked. And did they talk!

They arrived at all times on Friday and early Saturday morning at various venues by many forms of transport - train, car and taxi, bike, hitchhiking - no one, I believe, came by horse, donkey or mule - but they could well have done!

Teddy Goldsmith and Kathy James made us all to welcome - and who will forget those marvellous meals that Kathy put before us! Some slept at Teddy's and others slept around! There were rumours at one time that the Coastguards had been called out in search of a missing member - but rumours are rife in Cornwall

Guests were David Woodhams, the chairer of the New Zealand Values Party, Dorothy Rosenberg, who is associated closely with the Ecology movement in Canada, and Dr. James Whetter, chairman of the Cornish Nationalist Party

The business of the weekend consisted of several matters - the New Alliance, the prospective E.P. publication 'After Affluence', the strategy of the Party for the General Election, and plans for the A.G.M. and the Annual Conference. Several more mundane matters were talked about, and some problems were resolved.

THE NEW ALLIANCE MEETING

The meeting was attended by between 50 and 60 people. Of that number about 14 were members of the Ecology Party. The invitation list, it is understood, was in excess of 150.

The Eco members, during the meeting, continually made the point that Eco had either done - or was actively engaged in doing - all that were suggested as points of action at the meeting. The meeting was asked by the Eco members for any suggestions for and other points of action, but there were apparently none.

A suggestion that a presentation of the ecology case should be put to all candidates in the forthcoming General Election was agreed by consensus. As New Alliance did not propose to field any candidates, and any organisation that might arise from the meeting would not be directly entering the political field at the General Election, it was pointed out that this document could not be called a 'manifesto'. It was eventually decided to call it a 'challenge'.

Representatives of organisations and groups who were present on behalf of them pointed out that they could not commit their organisations to any course of action without referring back.

Several attempts were made to form a committee, or arrange a subsequent meeting; they met with little success. Finally, it was agreed that all who wished to serve on such a committee should remain behind after the meeting. Arrangements were made for the Ecology Party to be represented on any such committee.

An indecisive meeting, and something of a damp squib.

(This report was culled from two people who attended the meeting)

GENERAL ELECTION STRATEGY

There was a fair amount of discussion, during which some doubt was thrown by the Chairman and others on the advisability of having an

all-out election campaign with as many candidates as possible. Eventually a consensus was reached whereby guidelines were advised - a certain amount of money, a reasonable organisation and a candidate preferably well-known (from a sympathetic point of view!) in the area, and of good standing. Some money would be forthcoming from the N.E.C. but the effect would be that the local organisation would be expected to raise 99% of the money required.

A.G.M. and ANNUAL CONFERENCE

This is a very important event in the life of the Ecology Party - here the N.E.C. are elected and receive their instructions for the following year from the members attending. However good any other form of communication there is no better way than personal contact - the opportunity to discuss, hear other people's views and attempt to persuade them to yours.

It is vital to the continuation of the Ecology Party that as many members attend as possible - not only for the above reasons, but because it will show the outside world that there exists a group of people concerned about our society, ready with solutions to aid it, and enthusiastic about gaining political power to implement them.

DO COME - a further booking form is enclosed - you will see from it that there are ways of reducing the cost - please don't hesitate to get in touch with the organiser, Ron Andrews.

AFTER AFFLUENCE

This is the title given to the draft of a publication intended as a political programme for the E.P. Its contents were described in the paper given by David Fleming at the recent South West Conference (see elsewhere in the Newsletter).

It is a reasonably long publication (40 pages), and cannot be reasonably summarised here. In any case, the N.E.C. meeting in Cornwall carved it all up into little pieces, resulting in a necessity for a major re-write by David Fleming and a resulting piece of work which can have nowhere near as much cohesion as the original.

CAMPAIGN BOOKS

This bookshop has recently opened in London, and stocks over 1000 books and pamphlets from 60 diverse pressure groups, voluntary organisations, community groups and commercial publishers. It is open Monday to Friday 10 - 6, Saturday 10 - 1, and is at 9 Rupert Street, just two minutes walk from Piccadilly Circus.

BIRMINGHAM SOUTH BRANCH

The South Birmingham Group continues to grow, with now 19 fully paid up members, and meetings with an average of 12 members attending.

We circulate a duplicated sheet between each meeting with minutes and general information

Recently we have put in an appearance at our local street festival - both in the procession, in which 14 of us on bikes took part, carrying slogans such as 'No petrol, no pollution', 'Use public transport' and 'We have free transport', and by having a stall selling plants and garden produce (we also provided local eggs and goat's milk) It was all good publicity, and raised about £24 for our funds We have an on-going collection of paper, metals and wine bottles

The other continuous scheme we have thought up is also incidentally money-raising, but its primary aim is to make a stand against the consumer society We have each made a list of things we happen to have - such as a long ladder - pruning shears - invalid table - sleeping bags All these lists are combined on to one list, duplicated, and each member taking part in the scheme then has a copy If you want something you do not care to buy you can borrow it by using the list and paying a small charge (10p) per day This scheme has other advantages, amongst them the bringing together of people - such as the young and the old - in a communal effort

GOOD EARTH

The journal that comes to you with this Newsletter is still fighting for its existence; why don't you take out a subscription for a friend - its only £1.30 for twelve months Address is: The Circulation Manager, Good Earth, 18 Cofton Lake Road, Birmingham B45 8PL

A BOOK

Entitled 'Ectopia', by Ernest Callenbach, described as a novel about ecology, people and politics in 1999 Just a mention here - a review later, perhaps Published by Pluto Press at £1.20 paperback or £3.60 hardcover

AN APOLOGY

This issue of the Newsletter is very late - you may have noticed! It has been deliberately delayed in order to take note of the N.E.C. Meeting on July 22/23, and to provide documentation in connection with the forthcoming Annual Conference and A.G.M. Many, many apologies for keeping you so long without news