



PEOPLE newsletter

NOVEMBER. 1974

Editor: K. Michael Benfield NEW BUILDINGS TRINITY ST COVENTRY Telephone 22048

EDITORIAL

DEMOCRACY IS DEAD - LONG LIVE DEMOCRACY:

In Coventry the Labour controlled council having taken all seats on 2 minor committees have now done the same to dominate the education committee and thus ensure that no other opinion is voiced, let alone heard. The N.U.M. in their battle with the State capitalist coal board were careful to print their advice not to vote in favour of the productivity deal actually ON THE BALLOT PAPER. Striking transport drivers held Scotland to ransom whilst according to Sir Kenneth Keith the strikers to whom he recently gave way at Rolls Royce (Social contract or no social contract) were placing many foreign and supra national concerns in jeopardy. The old concept of democracy was designed to provide a representative voice to each member of a total community. Present society has created a growing number of groups each of which in itself may (or may not?) be a democratic representation of its membership. Whilst such organisations can operate in isolation all appears well but it is when 2 or more such groups vie for their own way (Control and power) that our old democracy is called into question. As another example let us take the determination of our present Government to implement nationalisation. Something less than 28% of all eligible votes were cast for the Labour party and it is estimated that only a third of its members really consider the Nationalisation proposals relevant or desirable or important. In other words our Government is going to make us have an industrial system for which only around 9% of all voters are in favour. Is this the "Government of the People, for the People BY the People"?

Once again evolution's basic rule "Survival of the Fittest" can be seen at work. Now it is the ability and fitness of groups to impose their will that is most evident. The trick seems to be to associate with a group that, in true evolutionary style, can get its way and impose its views by the exercise of most strength. Perhaps the time has come to recall King Arthur's words "Not 'Might is right' but Might for right" After all what more could we wish for our new born democracy?

CORRESPONDENCE. The following letter has been edited for space reasons.

"Sir,

I was disappointed with the reaction of some people at Liverpool. I had no intention of being divisive, neither was I saying the PEOPLE should move to the Left. but rather recognise that power is changing hands gradually and , it appears will continue to do so. Accepting that PEOPLE must either gain power or influence those with power, it seems logical to me to concentrate effort upon finding common ground with the Trade Unions. If this limits the appeal of PEOPLE for other factions, well so it must be, because like it or not the T.U.'s are gaining control of their own affairs, are capable of making or breaking our economy and Society. "Right" reaction cannot prevent it.

Also, whatever PEOPLE's aims it cannot condone the continuation of the status quo, if this does not already isolate us from various factions what does? One more point about the Liverpool conference. I am increasingly questioning whether various people fully appreciate the degree of altruism PEOPLE's philosophy demands. Talk about how we could go into business to raise the necessary money for advertising etc. seemed ironically out of place. Some members are already in profitable business and I do not accept that this money (or the salary for a full time fund raiser) could not be found now. I also found that there was a good deal of self hypnosis at Liverpool. The display of press cuttings may appear to show that support is growing whilst in truth we managed about the same response as the Go to Blazes candidate. Talk about attracting members from other parties was a ridiculous piece of self justification when we have not yet got the support of the Conservation Society. My own opinion is that effort should still be concentrated on uniting the environmental groups and influencing T.U.'s. If this opinion is untypical then I should not be in the party. (As it is I do not think it is untypical). However, one or two replies were "Thats your opinion!" as if it was illogical or of no consequence, rather than putting it to the test.

Continuation of PEOPLE press.

(4)

could be sold in ,000's at a discount to local groups who would organise their own distribution and sales, and keep the profit towards local funds. Your views, offers of help etc. to me (Ed).

COMMUNICATIONS TEACH IN(S) covering techniques of being interviewed, public speaking and committee work. NOT just lectures but practical sessions to take away your fears and hang ups and develop confidence using films and close circuit T.V. Priced at cost. Provisional dates 11th/12th January 1975 and 25th/26th January 1975. Details: Freda Sanders, c/o New Buildings, Trinity Street, Coventry.

ni

Obviously I'm considering joining the Labour Party (as I have been for three years) but I am still an ecologist first and anything else second. It's a dilemma I am determined to solve in the next few weeks, and hopefully at the same time put some roots down somewhere. So I won't be of help in the near future, but perhaps I may return to the fold soon."

Trevor Phillips,
388 Shroud End Cres, Shord End, BIRMINGHAM B34 7RG.

This letter raises several fundamental points of both philosophy, objective and strategy. Greater debate on these points would be welcome. (Ed.)

"Sir,

The idea of using a questionnaire to survey public opinion has occurred to me. Since receiving your letter I have discussed the idea with other members of Caithness Area PEOPLE. The question they have asked and I am asking, is "How do we avoid concealing public opinion by making assumptions about it in the form of the questionnaire"? Probably this problem does not have a complete solution. We, intend, however, to pursue the matter and I shall send you a copy of the questionnaire as soon as it has been drafted."

Laurence A. Thompson, Caithness Area Group,
15, Strathmore Rd, Thuris, Caithness. KW14 7PT.

(Well how would you overcome this problem? Your suggestions for publication please. Ed.)

LOCAL MEETINGS. The N.E.C. is very conscious of the failure of its members to visit all local groups, but can only plead pressure of time, distance, transport and cost as its excuse. However, if you feel a pressing need for one or more members to visit you, just write or ring, me with 2 suggested dates, times and places and I will arrange for someone to come and talk to you about philosophy, aims and objects etc (ed.)

MANIFESTO. Now available min, price 50p each (£5 if you can afford it). Send for your copies to Lesley Whittaker, 69, Hertford St. COVENTRY. (Plus 5p for post and packing)

PAPER RE-CYCLING : Waste paper is now fetching upto £20 a tonne compared to £5 per tonn a year ago.

SUBSCRIPTIONS. Have you paid your annual sub. for 1974? Area/Local groups £1 per member Isolated members £1.50 each. Please remit to National Treasurer.

THINKING ABOUT FUTURE LAND USE.

At the 33rd. National Conference of the C.P.R.E., some useful ideas and facts emerged about Britain's land use. At the moment 9.1% of Britains 54 million acres is urban which is expected to increase to 11.8% by the year 2000, a loss of 50,000 acres to urban development, a year. Agricultural land is expected to decrease from 43½ M. to 41 M. acrea in the next 30 years, 1 M. acres going to urban areas and 1M to forestry, making 5M acres for forests.

But any speculation about future land use has to bear in mind the following observations:

- Much of the land is at present in the ownership or under the control of less than 1% of the population, and there is little real social control over what they do with the land and surprisingly enough with the buildings also.
- the view of Colin Buchanan. "Agri business is urban minded... is doing more harm than anything to spoil the countryside.... Farmers in country clothes pander to town dwellers because it helps them conserve their holdings; but in practice farmers wear town clothes ... and where do their modern methods lead? Sparse expanses of prairie, ungainly factory - type buildings... Farmers are not on the conservationists side".

NEWS. Your news for inclusion in this newsletter. to me please (Ed).

FORTHCOMMING ATTRACTIONS.

Environmental Weekend in Sheffield 7/8 December will examine the way different environmental activitics relate together, define ideas/objectives explore politics AND field visits to polluting factories, I.C.I. Quarries etc. Details ;- Phil Goater. Sheffield 686801

T.V. For those of us who are ready to question the Hudson findings watch television on November 23 when in a two hour programme the Hudson people will put their money where their mouth is in the form of statistics and economic summaries

Nuclear Wastes Meriton Conservation Group are running a campaign to inform public of changes etc. Ideas and help to/from Jane Pink 42, Vineyard Hill Rd., London SW19.

PEOPLE ORGANISERS OPEN CONFERENCES :-(Venue and programme to be advised.)

LONDON 11.1.75

LEEDS OR PORTSMOUTH..... 15.3.75

Note these in your diary now.

NAMES AND ADDRESSES.

CHAIRMAN - A.M. (Tony) WHITTAKER 69, Hertford St. COVENTRY Cov. 22586 (Office)
 SECRETARY - C.L.(Clive) LORD. 44 Upper Batley Low Lane. Batley Yorks. Bat. 472767.
 TREASURER - A.L.(Lesley) WHITTAKER, 69 Hertford St. COVENTRY. Cov. 22586 (Office)
 POLICY REVISION - P.M. (Peter) Allen 16, West Park Rd. Leeds 8 Leeds 664669.
 STRATEGY - K.W. (Michael) Benfield c/o New Buildings. Trinity St. COVENTRY Cov. 22048.
 FUND RAISING - S. (Steve) Fagg. Liverpool.

EXTRA COPIES OF NEWSLETTER. available for you to circulate to all members of your group and others interested parties (Your local press?) @ cost price 6p each from me (Ed.)

CHANGE OF ADDRESS. Please let CRL and myself know immediately of any new addresses. Your own and other members - we may be out of touch. POSTERS a limited number of posters (22 x 18) are available. They read : YOUR FUTURE : Join a NEW PARTY PEOPLE Its common sense, If you would like some for meetings, house or other display contact Michael Benfield Price 10p each and 5p postage.

COMMENT. The following contribution is from Ian Peasley a member of the soil association.

The Current crisis in Farming

The extreme difficulties facing British beef farmers today result largely from the Government's inability to match supply to demand. The present glut of beef on the market is the result of gross mismanagement by the government which has allowed farmers to receive ridiculously low prices for their beef whilst at the same time they are paying extremely high prices for their animal foodstuffs. The appalling weather this season has aggravated the supply of cheap foodstuffs still further resulting in many hill farmers on the brink of disaster.

The U.K. is about 86% self-sufficient in beef and veal, and the task of any government is to balance this home production with imports, to meet the demand. This is not easily done because there is a considerable delay for producers of food to respond to a change in demand and also because the central control of such a large and widespread industry is far from straightforward.

The conventional solution is the setting up of a marketing board (as happened with milk and potatoes) which endeavours to control production by imposing quotas on producers and endeavours to control the buying and marketing of the produce. Also, conventionally, the government can set up guarantee payments or intervention buying schemes which are designed to ensure that the farmer receives at least an adequate minimum price for his produce.

But such solutions are only drugs which serve to relieve the symptoms of the real problem. As such they are suitable only as short term policies which could give the immediate support that the farmers so desperately need.

In the long term the only sound way of ensuring stability in the nation's largest industry is to:

- 1.) Stabilise the population at a level where the country can be self-sufficient in food and to
- 2.) Decentralise marketing and production of food so that, as much as possible, local needs are met by local production.

The first point ensures that the nation's long term food requirement is met, in the context of the growing need to divert food and resources to the developing countries. The second point ensures short term and long term stability in agriculture. On the smaller scale, local production is closely, monitored and controlled by people who are aware of the local demand and who are constantly in touch with the quantity and quality of available resources. Thus it can be envisaged, farmers would be far less vulnerable to harsh market factors, and any feedstuff shortages would be far less severe and not so widespread.

The PEOPLE press - our own national newspaper?

Peter Allen has now received encouraging offers of editorial and journalistic assistance. It appears that the difficulties in producing our own national newspaper on say a regular fournightly basis are not insuperable. The newspaper would be on sale to the public and provide a real alternative outlet for concern at present "suppressed" by other national and local papers. Initially it would have to be sold on street corners door to door, in pubs, etc., We need an army of news boys (and girls) forming local groups throughout the country prepared to give a commitment on this. Perhaps the paper

Continued on back of front sheet