



Leadership

Watching the Parking Meters

Movement for Survival and PEOPLE were both conceived not as conventional political parties, but as movements.

Strongly decentralised, with the name just providing a banner and co-ordination for diverse 'Eco' and 'Green' organisations and groups to act together politically.



Thus, from the outset, there was never intended to be a 'Leader'.

A Chair is Not a Leader

Of course, the organising group needs someone to run its meetings – a chair – as well as other specific roles.

Throughout the 70's, 80's and 90's it was very clear that the chair of the executive group was not the chair of the party as a whole, let alone a leader.

Tony Whittaker was selected as first chair of the National Executive Committee (NEC) in 1973 and reselected (by the AGM) in 1974.



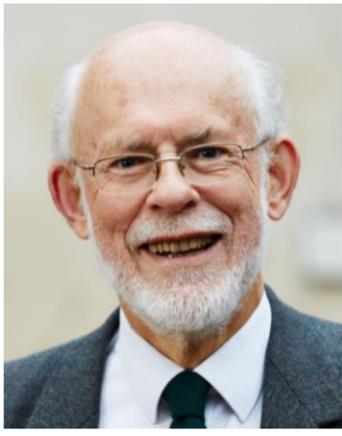
On 14th February 1975 the NEC agreed "*NEC to appoint its own Chairman. Concept of Party Leader inappropriate unless or until one emerged.*"

In June 1975 they clarified "*Any party member had authority to make any statement, however controversial, without dissociating the party, provided it was consistent with official policy or a logical consequence of it.*"

There Is No Leader

The 30th November 1975 NEC meeting "*Affirmed that the NEC was a co-ordinating committee, not the leadership of the party.*"

The 1975-6 NEC had decided to dispense with a fixed chair and rotate the role around the NEC members. This did cause problems and after the 1976 AGM the NEC appointed **Jonathan Tyler** as its chair.



At the 1977 AGM a formal written constitution was adopted. The word 'leader' does not appear in the text. Tyler continued as chair of the NEC until 1979 when his maximum 3 years on the NEC was up and **Jonathon Porritt** became chair.



The question of a party leader was first formally debated at conference in 1979 and was rejected by 95 to 92 votes – well short of the 2/3rd majority needed to adopt it.



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 Faul (Policy Co-ordinator), Jonathan Tyler (Chairman), Teddy Goldsmith. Absent from picture: Leslie Spoor, Biff Vernon, John Luck, John Wareing.

Centralise//Devolve – Pragmatism//Principles

The continuing tensions between the centralists and decentralists through the 1980s saw repeated attempts to treat various figures as the de-facto party leader.

Sometimes it was an individual seeking self-aggrandisement acting as if he (usually he) were Leader, sometimes it was factions within the membership seeking to modernise and be more media and voter friendly, and sometimes it was external pressure for a simple identifiable spokesperson.

Always there was push-back from the soul of the party.

In 1982 it was decided that the National Council (as the NEC had become) should have three co-chairs, explicitly to prevent the Chair acting as de-facto Leader.

In 1983 the decentralist tendency managed to expunge the word 'national' from the constitution, renaming the NC as Ecology Party Council.

Speakers Are Not Leaders

Since 1975 when the NEC decreed "*Party Spokesmen [sic]: each occasion to be allocated as it arose by the NEC*", Spokespeople on particular areas of policy were appointed by the Council as required.

In 1986 the centralists scored a win when they introduced the concept of "Principal Speakers" elected annually by conference. Initially there were six joint principle speakers as the public face of the party. The council continued with 3 co-chairs.

Or Are They?

There matters rested until 1991 and the controversial introduction of the Green 2000 modernising constitution.

The debates around this ripped the party apart and arguably contributed to the failure to capitalise on the 1989-90 membership surge.

Green 2000 reduced the number of Principal Speakers to two – one male, one female – and reintroduced a single chair of the executive body

Sara Parkin was Chair, and Richard Lawson and Jean Lambert the PS's

The Law Says Thou Shalt have a Leader

And there matters rested until the turn of the century. Green 2000 failed to produce the promised electoral success, but there was little appetite in the party for further constitutional wrangling.

In the constitution, the Philosophical Basis still said:

PB443 We seek a society in which people are empowered and involved in making the decisions which affect them. We reject the hierarchical structure of leaders and followers, and instead advocate participatory politics. For this reason the Green Party does not have an individual leader.

The 1998 Representation of the People Act introduced the requirement for political parties to be registered with the Party name and the name of the "Leader" in order to be recognised in elections.

In response the constitution was amended:

5. x) For the purposes of registration the Chair of the Party Executive shall be regarded as the "leader".

New Members, New Ideas

As the century turned membership was starting to grow again, and there was an increasing body who, perhaps unaware of the historical and philosophical roots of the leader question, saw it as natural that a party should have a, preferably 'strong', leader.

With MEPs and Assembly members the party was getting a little more media air-time and the Principal Speakers were treated by the media as if they were the leaders however much they protested.

Motions to rebrand the Principal Speakers as Co-Leaders were brought forward in Lancaster in Autumn 2005, in Hove in Autumn 2006 there were acrimonious arcane constitutional debates on the issue, ridiculed in some of the press. Swansea in Spring 2007 saw another attempt to simply re-brand Principal Speakers and a more considered motion to put the constitutional changes needed to a referendum of all members.

The referendum passed in Autumn 2007 and the first Leader of the party, Caroline Lucas, was elected in Autumn 2008. She was re-elected in 2010, stood aside in 2012 when Natalie Bennett was elected. In 2014 Lucas & Bartley were elected as joint-leaders and re-elected in 2016.

(This panel has been a Wordy production with few pictures of 'Leader' figures because you should all be Leaders)