

SOUTH - WEST ECONeWS

no. 6 Jan/feb '84

Newsletter of the SW area
of the ECOLOGY PARTY.

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Conference & AGM at Exeter: Feb 25 Speaker on CAMPAIGNS

The important south-west area conference and annual general meeting will be at Exeter University on Saturday February 25th. All Ecology Party members in the SW are entitled to attend and to vote at the AGM.

Once again there is the attraction of a speaker on an important topic: Tony Jones (or, if unavailable, Jean Lambert or Mike Crowson) will speak on Ecology Party campaigns - both current campaigns such as the Campaign for Real Democracy and future campaigns such as Food/Agriculture and the Other Economic Summit. In addition there will be workshops on individual campaigns. Other items for discussion at the conference include the coming local and European Elections.

Area officers have to be elected at the AGM. At least one new officer has to be found since Bernard Little after a year's sterling work as area co-ordinator.

The proceedings will commence at 10.30a.m. at Cornwall House, Exeter University. Exeter Eco will again be providing excellent, cheap nosh at lunchtime. See you there.

ARE YOU GOING TO SOUTHPORT?

If you are thinking of going to the Southport conference in March and are interested in co-ordinating/sharing transport arrangements from the SW then please bring your ideas to Exeter on February 25th.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

- 10.30-12 AGM Part 1: Reports from officers
discussion of area organisation
funds and fundraising.
 - 12-1 Euro-elections: candidate(s), alter-
native campaigns.
 - 1-1.45 LUNCH
 - 1.45-2.15 AGM Part 2: Election of offi-
cers.
 - 2.15-3.15 Talk on Ecology Party campaigns
by (probably) Tony Jones.
 - 3.15-4.15 Workshops on:
(a) individual campaigns
(b) local elections
(c) Euro-elections
 - 4.15-4.45 Feedback from workshops.
 - 4.45 AOB
- Any suggestions for further agenda items
or other comments to Bernard Little please
(address on back page).

A REPORT ON THE SW AREA CONFERENCE (EXETER 3/12/83)

A total of thirteen branches from West Wiltshire down to St. Austell were represented at the SW area conference at Exeter University on Saturday December 3rd.

Discussion on the development of branch strategies and the forthcoming European elections revealed two basic positions. On the one hand, Bristol, the largest urban centre in the region, was undergoing 'internal devolution' and trying to cover a wide range of issues (see report on Bristol elsewhere in newsletter). Bristol had decided to concentrate on local elections, not to stand for the Europeans (no enthusiasm from its immediate neighbours either), but to mount an alternative campaign in key wards with a view to 1985.

On the other hand, the more rural areas, especially in Devon, were dealing with a couple of issues apiece. They were more interested in standing in the Euro-elections since outside Exeter and Bristol, there are few District Elections this year.

The main points arising were: Local elections. Plan in advance, try to plug a settled candidate in a ward year after year, tap sympathetic councillors for information. European elections. Need to know more about the role of Euro-parliament, capitalise on our global perspective, Agriculture and Defence are key issues.

Local and European campaigns can be integrated - remember the educative and publicity aspect of elections. A Euro-candidate in Devon is now very likely but other areas of the SW will either be mounting 'alternative' campaigns or ignoring the Euro-elections entirely.

In the afternoon, Jonathon Tyler gave an interesting talk on the Party Organisation Working Party's proposals which aroused so much debate at Malvern IV. Several misconceptions were cleared up, but the thorny issue of effective individual/area representation at the national level will be hard to resolve.

CHRIS ROSE and STEVE SHAW

ELECTION DAY SCHOOL

Bristol Ecology Party are organising an election day school on Saturday 11th February. The purpose is to bring together 'old hands' in order to pool their knowledge and experience and to pass this on to those who are new to elections, particularly those who have joined since the general elections. The venue will be in the Bristol area but it is open to all members in the region.

The scope of the event will include election planning, ward selection, resources and how to make best use of them, legal and procedural aspects, leaflets - design and content, canvassing and much, much more. There will be a small charge (£1.75 - negotiable, includes food). Contact BOB WILSON, tel (0272) 852740 for more information.

And another diary event from Bristol Eco: A Green Fair (day) and Celildh (evening) on Saturday March 3rd. For more details contact Oliver Savage, 27 Devonshire Rd, Westbury Park, Bristol Tel (0272) 40794.

FROM THE AREA CO-ORDINATOR

by BERNARD LITTLE (Somerset, Avon,
Wilts and Dorset)

Many new members join us and then search around for things to do. While it is necessary to have the occasional speaker, the whole of branch activity cannot revolve around this. Real business has to be undertaken so that we are seen to be doing something of value. Contesting local elections can seem sterile to many who do not feel confident in their own abilities. Unless local elections can hinge around real local concerns our political role may seem superfluous.

Every branch should have a secretary, fundraiser and press officer with a well thought out framework and adequate back-up and provision for discussion of actions. Find out when your local elections are over the next 5-6 years. Then draw up a branch strategy as described in the last SW ECONews. So what can you do then? Here are a couple of ideas:

EDUCATION

An area where we can have influence is in putting pressure on schools to adopt an overall interdisciplinary approach to environmental education. Those people with a close connection with a school can begin to shift our ideas into the classroom by involvement with school governors, PTA's etc.

If you are interested in this area of community action, I would recommend that you get hold of a copy of 'The Conservation and Development programme for the UK' published by Kogan Page (at a mere £15!). There is a lot of valuable source material in this book. In addition there is of course the Ecology Party's own education policy working party who should also be contacted for information.

PLANNING

Once again 'The Conservation and Development Programme for the UK' serves as an impressive lever to draw in sympathetic individuals and Green organisations for the serious consideration of the preparation of local 'Green Plans'. This is an area which will have to be developed over the next few years.

A Green Plan can serve the purpose of being the basic framework for local Ecology Party manifestos as well as involving other Green groups. We need to show that 'Think globally, act locally' is not just a slogan but the basis of a plan that is really needed if we are to have a future.

NOTE: Bernard Little has now moved away from Wiltshire and consequently will be resigning his post of area co-ordinator for the eastern part of the region. A new co-ordinator for Somerset, Avon, Dorset and Wilts will have to be found at the area conference on Feb. 25.

ECOTROBINGS (pinched as usual from Exeter Eco's newsletter to fill up another awkward space)

The theme of the 1984 Devon County Show will be 'Power on the Land'. The organisers are hoping to have lots of alternative energy displays including bio-gas, windpower, solar energy and much more. Meanwhile Peter Tansley (of Exeter Eco) is going to ask the show committee if he can cruise around the showground on his human-powered Oxtrike, collecting aluminium cans.

AROUND THE LOCAL PARTIES

BRISTOL

CHRIS ROSE reports: This time last year we were nearly down and out. Battered into shape just into time for last May's local elections, we came out no better than previously, but at least ready for June.

Membership soared and its been all go ever since. The kind of self-confidence alluded to at Malvern has swept us too.

Our monthly meetings have left scope (time-wise) for other developments, whilst providing a focus for what's going on. At this level we have sponsored fundraising events, ideas on future campaigning, discussion of and media comment on city-wide issues, and final decision making on strategy. A monthly newsletter keeps everyone up-to-date with developments.

Ward groups were set up last summer in our stronger areas. They have run street stalls, fundraising and social events, succeeding to some extent in tapping support 'on the doorstep' from casual sympathisers and involving otherwise inactive members.

Currently there are two specialist groups. One is organising events such as a Green Fair and a Celildh. The other is tackling the long-term planning and organisation of our election effort for May. Three wards will soon receive the first of 2 pre-election leaflets. Some weaker areas are to have meetings to get things moving and attempts will be made to find another 10 candidates so we can contest all 23 seats coming up. Further, Bristol and Woodspring are collaborating on an election workshop (see elsewhere).

Once you get going you soon find that there's far more you want to do than you ever imagined . . .

PLYMOUTH

STEVE SHAW reports: Like Bristol we have had a welcome increase in enthusiasm and confidence together with a significant increase in membership locally. We now meet twice monthly and average attendance at our meetings is a healthy 15 or so. In addition, we now have a regular branch newsletter.

Unlike Bristol, Plymouth has no local elections this May but we are currently in the middle of a City Council by-election, caused by the bankruptcy of the sitting Tory! The election is in a ward which had no Eco members. Already we have two new recruits and the early signs from canvassing are encouraging. There is nothing like an election to maintain momentum and interest!

On the campaigns front, we have been involved in the Campaign for Real Democracy. A public meeting on the topic was addressed by Tony Jones; we have conducted a street survey of public opinion; and we are lobbying the three local MPs. We are confident that we shall have the support of all three against an increase in election deposits.

SWINDON

Another new branch to add to the those mentioned in the last SW ECOLNS is Swindon. Swindon Ecology Party was launched last September at a public meeting attended by nearly forty people. The speaker was Ned Barham, who was the Eco candidate in N.Wilts in the general election.

Of those who attended this meeting, about 30 expressed an interest in future activities. Public meetings on particular topics have been arranged for every two months well into 1984. Business meetings will be held between the public meetings.

MORE NEWS FROM LOCAL PARTIES

EXETER

Here is a review of the Exeter Eco-year by MARTIN SPOOLMAN (from their newsletter). The first part of the year was (as '84 hopefully will be) taken up with local elections: accepting candidates' nominations (yes they really did volunteer!), leafletting, canvassing and digging allotments on the Leisure Centre Site. And we reaped our reward with two very creditable results, highlighted by Jane Smith coming fourth out of eight in Topshan. Great performance!

Then what happens? Maggie plunges us straight into a full blown general election campaign. Help! Well, we got help and even if Peter Frings' actual result was not particularly spectacular (squeezed again!) we got some great publicity, new members and thousands of leaflets were distributed.

After all the election fever it was time for consolidation and in the summer we had an election of officers. And what do you know some new faces emerged!

Successes in the latter part of the year included the Campaign for Real Democracy, further star publicity in the Exeter Advertiser and the discovery for many of us of Magic Dust (basically ground down granite). If we can push for wide use of this stuff we could make the land much more productive.

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT WATER?

Section 7 of the Water Act 1983 makes provision for the establishment of a forum to discuss the policies and actions of the Water Authority. There seems to be no objection in principle by the Water Authority to the Ecology Party being nominated to sit on the Regional Recreation and Conservation Committee. It appears that the SW Water Authority will seriously consider our nomination. Branches in the Wessex Water Authority area should watch closely for the official notices in the local newspapers and apply for nomination at the appropriate time.

The terms of reference of these committees are extremely wide and would give our representatives an ideal chance to put our wider perspective to real use and discussion. We can begin to make headway above and beyond the role we normally play in local politics. In fact become a regional force. We must take this opportunity.

BERNARD LITTLE

TORBAY

A free film show organised by Torbay Ecology Party in November, despite a modest turnout, was an interesting evening and produced a couple of new members. Public meetings on recycling are being organised for March/april at Torquay Town Hall.

Dean Holden (remember him!) is trying very hard to organise a recycling centre in Totnes, and it is hoped that a similar campaign can be organised in Torbay.

Like many other branches, Torbay is getting involved in the Campaign for Real Democracy. They plan to use a questionnaire on the subject as part of their electioneering and to find out how the local residents feel about the way they are represented. STOP PRESS: Bottle banks have arrived in Torquay, Totnes, Paignton and Brixham. Whoopee!

GREENPEACE APPEAL

As you may have heard, Greenpeace is selling off £1000 shares in its boat, the Cedarlea, in an attempt to raise the money to pay off the Windscale fine. The Ecology Party is determined to raise £1000 to buy one of these shares. If you or your branch would like to contribute, please send your cheque payable to the Ecology Party (Greenpeace Appeal) to the Party Treasurer, Peter Harvey, 36 Rose Hill, Rednal, Birmingham B45 8RR.

The intention is to publicly present Greenpeace with a £1000 cheque in early February so please act speedily.

Greenpeace have of course been fined a total of £36000 for contempt in their actions aimed at calling attention to the emission of radioactive waste from Windscale.

PARTY COUNCIL REP'S PLEA

Anna Pawlyn, SW rep on Party Council, requests that individuals or branches should not hesitate to contact her if there is anything she can do for them in her capacity as SW rep.

NORTH DEVON LINK RD.

The campaign against the proposed route of the North Devon Link Road continues. Roger Joanes play of selling off square foot plots of land which lie on the proposed route has so far been successful. There have been hundreds of buyers from all over the world.

And apparently it is still not too late to buy a plot of land. So if you are interested in helping to foil the roadbuilders and planners get in touch with Roger at The Old Railway Station, Filleigh, Barnstaple, Tel Filleigh 3II.

Many of you will have seen Roger peering out of page 3 of the Guardian back in early January - some very welcome publicity.

SW ECONEWS

Yet another plea for information and articles from members and branches for inclusion in SW ECONEWS. And branches please remember to send me copies of all your newsletters.

Allcopy to the editor, Steve Shaw address below.

SW ECONEWS is produced at irregular intervals to coincide with issues of the main Econews. The copy-date is 14 days prior to the publication date of the next Econews.

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Somerset, Avon, Dorset, Wilts: (until Feb 25) Bernard Little, 70 West Hill Rd, Hutley, Plymouth. Tel (0752) 265103.

East Cornwall: John Chadwick, 19 North Road, Torpoint, Cornwall. Tel (0752) 813456.

West Cornwall: Howard Hoptrough, 13 Palmouth Place, Carnyorth, St. Just, Penzance. Tel (0736) 788130.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY Herbert Bell, 14 Priory Park, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire. Tel (022 16) 4387.

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John Chadwick (see above).