



## Oxford Ecology Movement

### Ideas & Policies

A summary of the Manifesto

THE OXFORD ECOLOGY MOVEMENT is a new political group standing in Oxford at the general election on May 3rd. Ecology is the science of communities, the relationship of plants, animals and people with each other and their environment.

The ecological approach looks at life as a whole; The OEM is thus very different in outlook from the other political parties, who are grounded in a system of economics out of touch with the earth's realities and people's needs and aspirations.

#### PHILOSOPHY

Our philosophy in the OEM is that we must live on the earth in harmony with each other, with our surroundings, the sea, the wildlife, the atmosphere and the countryside, and not continue to try to ignore, control or suppress the forces of nature.

This means we must re-examine 'development', 'economic growth', 'technological advance' etc., and ask whether the plans of our present political parties and their leaders can be reconciled, in the long run, with a sane, safe and stable life on planet earth. We believe that the existing policies of government and the civil service (which initiates many of them) are dangerous, and will make life worse, not better, as the years pass.

Bigger is not better, but makes it difficult for people to understand and contribute to their work and their community. 'Efficiency' often means an interesting job being replaced by a mechanical one. Enormous amounts of taxpayers' money are wasted because the bureaucracy is too remote to understand or listen to peoples' real needs.

The OEM wants to recover the intimacy of real life, with people having real control over their own activities, environment and future. This means important changes in society, from big to small, from centralised power to local power, and from imbalance, stress and pollution to self-sufficiency, health and an understanding of our limitations as well as our possibilities. The challenge of living with the world is perhaps greater than that of living against it, but it is an open road to the future, not a blind alley of slow destruction.

Ecologists have shaken the existing parties in France and Germany. Let us do it here also!

#### POLICIES

OEM's policies, open to change by the membership, currently include the following elements which we put forward as a basis for a sane future.

##### GOVERNMENT

Parliament should be elected by proportional representation, with a new upper house consisting of elected and appointed 'senators' but no hereditary peers. Power to raise taxes and to make most decisions should be in the hands of district councils, London being mostly responsible for foreign dealings and acting as a co-ordinator. A written constitution, bill of rights and a Freedom of Information Act would safeguard the public from secretive bureaucracy and misuse of power.

##### TAX & ALLOWANCES

A basic personal income (replacing tax allowances and social security) should be paid automatically to all adults. Tax on other income should be simple and progressive (no poverty traps), and designed to prevent excessive riches and exploitation; the range of take-home earnings should be about 3:1 maximum to minimum.

##### MATERIALS

Long-lasting and hard-wearing goods should be encouraged; a materials tax would favour makers producing fewer long-lasting goods against those making lots of throw-away products as the former would use less material.

##### FINANCE

Investment finance should come from credit unions, mutual finance societies and small local banks, with a nationalised banking system for clearing and foreign currency arrangements.

A main aim is to increase national self-sufficiency and so avoid some of the instabilities of international finance and trade.

## POPULATION

As a gradual long-term aim, ecologists believe that the population should decrease over 150 years or so to about 20-30 million, to balance food and available land. We believe that as the limits to growth of all kinds are understood, people will not want to have more children than the country can support.

## HEALTH

Health and welfare should be more positive, geared to the prevention of disease. Reduction of pollution of all kinds (including agricultural antibiotics and inorganic fertilisers) would improve health, as would eating more whole foods (as opposed to processed) and lower consumption of meat, sugar and sweets. Public information on the dangers of too much alcohol and tobacco should not be restricted by the fear of losing tax revenue as is now the case. Such education and health measures should be administered at the district level; small local hospitals near to patients' homes should be favoured over the huge impersonal ones in big towns.

## HOUSING

Housing policies should be based on conservation and renovation of existing buildings, not on large-scale 'redevelopment'. New designs with good insulation and solar heating etc. would be cheaper to run, and should be actively encouraged (both new houses and conversions) by subsidies.

## ENERGY

Energy should be saved not wasted, and energy sources used safely to avoid pollution and radioactivity. Nuclear power is expensive and dangerous; all construction of atomic power stations should stop, and all existing ones phased out, leaving only facilities for looking after radioactive waste. We need to spend the money now wasted on expensive nuclear power on developing alternative safe renewable energy (wind, waves, sun, biogas etc.), and on saving it through insulation and heat recovery systems.

## TRANSPORT

In the same context, goods should where possible be produced locally to avoid unnecessary transportation. Freight must also be shifted from roads to railways and canals, and motorway building stopped.

## EDUCATION

OEM would like to see schools and education less rigid and more relevant to everyday life. Much teaching could be part-time by people from outside schools sharing their knowledge and skills, with work-experience etc. for 15-18 year-olds. Pre-school groups should be run by local communities. Further education should be available full-time, and on a part-time basis throughout life. University degree courses should be less specialised giving a more thorough general understanding of the world.

## WORK

Work should be more flexible, so that it is easier for people to take various mixtures of part-time jobs to supplement their basic personal income. Production-line methods in which people don't really participate in what they are making should be replaced by more interesting and involving methods of working. Large companies should be split up, and all the workforce should be able to share in decision-making in firms. Co-operatives should be encouraged. We suggest also a period of 'community service' so that everyone takes a share of necessary but unpleasant jobs such as coal mining and collecting taxes and rubbish; no one should have to do these things for their whole working lives.

## AGRICULTURE

Farming should be on a human scale; big agribusiness units should be broken up and the land offered to those with a real interest in the future quality of the soil rather than quick profits, land ownership to be vested in a public trustee system. Organic methods should be encouraged, and factory farming phased out. Allotment cultivation should be encouraged and more land made available. Marginal land should be used more productively, for grazing and forestry (Britain is very short of wood) rather than shooting grouse.

## WILDLIFE

More extensive and diverse habitats should be set aside for wildlife, which will also benefit from smaller farm units. Importation of all endangered species and products made from them should be stopped; sperm whale oil can easily be replaced.

## your vote counts

a vote for the old parties only confirms them in their road to disaster

## vote ecology, vote green

your candidate is:

**Anthony Cheke**

