

A
FUTURE
for our children.
An environment
fit for
PEOPLE

A Political Statement by



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What is this election about? Does anyone really know? Have either of the major parties worked out a constructive long-term policy? Have either of them told us where we are going, what sort of society they are creating for us? The answer is unfortunately no. They are simply criticising each other over their respective handling of such secondary issues as the miners' strike or Britain's entry into the Common Market. Both parties intend to go on muddling through on a day-to-day basis dealing with each problem as it occurs, in that way which is most politically expedient, accommodating each new trend, however socially disruptive it might be, rather than making any attempt to reverse it.

All this was possible while Britain was rich and powerful and when political blunders could only lead to problems on a limited scale. This is no longer so. Britain is poor, nearly bankrupt and its social fabric has been insidiously undermined by 150 years of industrialisation. In addition, political and economic activity will soon be carried out on such a mammoth scale that a single wrong decision on the part of a government could have global repercussions, cause areas the size of Britain to become uninhabitable and lead to the deaths of tens of millions of people.

In these unprecedented conditions it is essential that we have the courage to do something we have never done before; that is face reality however unpleasant it might be. We must also be determined to elect to power people who are not the ordinary run-of-the-mill politicians, people who can think beyond political expediency, who do not try to win votes by promising all sorts of petty benefits which they are not in a position to provide, save perhaps at an intolerable social and ecological cost, and who can move our society along that course most likely to provide our children with a tolerable future—clearly a very different course from that to which we are committed today.

Consider the problems our politicians are concerned with today: the balance of payments, the value of the pound, industrial productivity, the level of exports. It is assumed without question that these are the important issues; but on what grounds? We are told that these are basic economic priorities. But even if this were so, why should economic considerations be paramount?

The object of economics after all is to ensure the optimum distribution of resources within a society, not torture it out of shape so that it may absorb the resources which economists have arbitrarily decreed its inhabitants should consume. Economics, it should be evident to everyone, except perhaps to economists, should be subordinated to social requirements, not the other way around.

At this point one might ask where is economic growth actually taking us. Is it really creating a better world? Technologists, inebriated with their apparent conquest of nature, never tire of describing the technological paradise they are creating for us. But is it really a paradise? Are we sure that we want such a world?

Do we really long to live in skyscrapers half a mile high in cities of a hundred million people? Do we pine for a man-made cement and plastic world in which the brash artefacts of mass society have been effectively substituted for the varied and subtle works of nature, in which everything which does not directly contribute to man's immediate material comforts will have been systematically eliminated—a world in which we are to be pampered from birth to death by an all pervasive state welfare system which deprives us of all initiative, all responsibility, all risk?

Do we really regard such things as supersonic transports, individual flying kits, radar devices that plug directly into our brains, cyborgs, or man-machine hybrids and the remaining paraphernalia of a futuristic space-aged society as anything more than the puerile gimmickry of what were once avant-garde comic strips?

Man has undoubtedly suffered from many things during his tenancy of this planet—but never from not possessing a wrist-watch television set or a radar device plugged into his brain, no more than our society at present suffers from not possessing a third airport, a channel tunnel nor a fleet of Concorde's. These may well be very ingenious things. But they are irrelevant. They solve no human problems and can play no part in a strategy of survival.

Besides, it is essential that we realise the cost of achieving this technological nightmare. To get the massive supplies

of oil at the right prices to keep our industry expanding, we shall have to undertake a massive crash programme of oil production in our coastal waters.

We shall be forced to disregard its inevitable repercussions on coastal communities and on the environment. The North Sea is already very seriously polluted, and even if it were shown beyond any shadow of a doubt that these activities would transform it into a lifeless waste, even if it were clearly demonstrated that the villages and towns on the Scottish and Cornish coasts would be transformed into a stretch of squalid urban slums, we would have to persist undaunted in our designs, totally disregarding such minor considerations.

It would mean continually finding new ways of disposing of the ever greater quantities of some 500,000 different pollutants which the atmosphere, our rivers and the surrounding seas are ever less capable of absorbing. Every hole in the ground, and every disused mine shaft would eventually be filled with dangerous poisons which would almost certainly end up by contaminating our precious ground water supplies. It would mean building countless more office blocks, factories, airports, housing estates, covering ever more essential agricultural land with cement, further mutilating what remains of our landscape with more pylons, more rubbish dumps, more motor-ways. It would mean damming up more estuaries and flooding more valleys to satisfy industry's limitless water requirements. It would mean converting our already devastated cities into vast industrial wastelands in which crime, delinquency, violence, vandalism, drug addiction and general squalor would rapidly achieve the levels that already render urban life in the USA so totally intolerable. Even if we make these terrible sacrifices we shall only assure at best a further decade or two of economic growth. This clearly cannot be sustained indefinitely in a world of finite resources with a finite capacity to absorb human and industrial wastes. By the 1990s the impact of our activities on the natural environment will have become intolerable. At this point our industrial society must inevitably collapse, and the more we commit ourselves to economic growth the more dramatic will be the consequences of this collapse. The only course open to us if we wish to avoid human misery on an unprecedented scale is to reduce the impact of our

activities on our natural environment, redesign our economy so that it consumes less resources (which in any case shall not be available to it), generates less pollution and has a less disruptive effect on social systems.

But if we modify our economy in this way, how can we combat poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and all the other problems whose solution requires massive expenditures on scientific research, technological development and industrial growth? But are we sure that these problems can really be solved in this way? Immense sums of money have already been spent throughout the world towards these ends. But what has been the result? Everywhere these problems are getting worse. Are we sure that we really understand them, that we have not interpreted them in that way which makes them appear amenable to a technological solution, simply because this is the only one our society has to offer, while we refuse to adopt that life-style which would provide their only real solution?

Poverty. Practically every country in the world has committed itself to economic growth, and the elimination of poverty is in every case the principal justification for it, and yet poverty is everywhere on the increase. Even in the USA, the richest country in the world, 21 million people are still officially classified as poor. Yet America's 'standard of living' is about two and a half times our own. This means that with a 3 per cent annual growth in GNP, which we would be hard put to achieve, it would take us 50 years to reach a situation which appears hardly more favourable to the elimination of poverty than is our own today. It is undoubtedly true that to be poor in America means having an income and a command over material goods that is something like 30 times higher than that of an Indian or Nigerian. But we must not forget that American cities are designed for a resource-intensive way of life. If one lives in a city, with no public transport, 20 miles from one's work, and another 20 miles in the opposite direction from a shopping centre, while one's children go to school still further away in yet another direction, one's family clearly requires two, if not three, motor cars and to be without them is to suffer from a form of material deprivation which presumably can be classified as poverty. Indeed, as Illich says, economic growth does not eliminate poverty, it simply modernises it. How-

ever, to modernise poverty is very costly in terms of non-renewable resources. Only the most naive can really believe that the USA with 6 per cent of the world's population will, in a resource starved world, be allowed for very long to go on consuming between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of its resources. What then must we do? Clearly, the only realistic strategy for combating poverty is to re-design our society so that far less material goods are required for the purposes of everyday living. Consider the need for a motor car. It is probably required for three purposes only. To go to work, to visit one's family and friends, and to show off. Surely it cannot be too difficult to design a society in which people work closer to their homes, and their family and friends live closer by, while it cannot be beyond the scope of our ingenuity to devise less disruptive methods for showing off. Such a society would undoubtedly be highly decentralised and economic activity would be on a considerably smaller scale. In addition, this would provide us with a far more human environment than that in which we live today.

Unemployment. Unemployment levels are still high both in the USA and in Britain, and with the energy crisis, are likely in the near future to reach still less tolerable levels. As paradoxical as it may seem, one has to go back to pre-industrial times to find a society with permanent full employment. Yet this was a feature of most tribal societies before they were colonised by the West. That is why Bihari had to be imported into Assam, Tamils into Ceylon and Negroes into the West Indies. The local tribal people could not be persuaded to work in our vast plantations. With them the family and the community were the basic social and economic units and this provided them with a far more satisfying life style.

In the meanwhile, as industry develops, so does it become increasingly capital-intensive, thereby systematically reducing the number of jobs which can be provided for a given amount of capital investment. Unfortunately today there is no longer anything like the available capital, nor the resources to provide more than a fraction of the jobs now required in the world, especially in



'PEOPLE'

Candidate

for

EYE

1974

VOTE for GOLDSMITH

Edward Goldsmith is the son of the late Major Frank Goldsmith, O.B.E., T.D., who served with the Loyal Suffolk Hussars from 1904-22, and was Conservative M.P. for the Stowmarket Division of Suffolk from 1910-18.

Your candidate was born in Paris in 1928, was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, 1947-50, and served as an officer in the Intelligence Corps 1953-55.

He has devoted most of his time to the study of human societies (both primitive and advanced), as well as ecology and cybernetics.

In 1969 he founded the *Ecologist*, a monthly magazine of which he is publisher and editor.

He is author of an, as yet unpublished, manuscript entitled "The Theory of a Unified Science". He edited and partly wrote "Can Britain Survive?" in 1971 and was co-author of the now-famous "A Blueprint for Survival" in 1972. He is at present involved in working out a sequel to this document to be entitled "A Culturalist Manifesto".

His headquarters for the election will be at The Crown, Framlingham (Telephone 723521).

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Africa, Asia and South America, where vast numbers of people previously living from subsistence agriculture are moving to towns in search of jobs. But it is also true of Britain. Consider the iron-ore terminal at Huntingdon on the Clyde. This is to cost £26m and is expected to provide a mere 200 jobs. This works out at £130,000 per job. How many jobs can this country provide at this price? The answer is very few indeed. Clearly one must replace machines by men or more precisely by smaller and simpler machines which do not replace so many men, which permit us to provide more employment for a given capital outlay, and this implies once more a radical decentralisation of society.

Homelessness. Throughout the world, efforts to build houses to meet demand have failed and are failing more pathetically every year. India in 1950 was short of 2,800,000 housing units, by 1960 the official figure had increased to 9,300,000 while in 1970 it has risen still further to 12,000,000. In Britain our efforts to build new houses are equally inadequate. In 1967, 415,000 new houses were built: in 1969 only 370,000; in 1971 the figure had fallen to 364,000. The finance and resources required to build more houses will be increasingly difficult to obtain which means that, regardless of which government is elected, the number of new houses built will continue to fall. But is homelessness really the result of a shortage of houses? In reality it appears to be the result of a combination of factors including the population explosion, urbanisation, mobility and the disintegration of the family unit. The last is possibly the most important. In Britain, in Victorian times, there were eight or 10 to a house. Today there are little more than two which means a demand for four to five times more houses. The only realistic long-term strategy for solving the housing crisis is to re-establish the family and build bigger houses for more extended family units. Since the disintegration of the family is the principal cause of a whole set of other maladjustments, we shall in this manner, be solving many other problems too. But all this can only be done by de-industrialising and decentralising society. It is also in this way that mobility can best be reduced and the cultural controls that once kept a check on population growth recreated.

Ignorance. Throughout the world illiteracy is increasing despite massive investments which are still insufficient to satisfy apparent needs for more capital-intensive schools. Ignorance, however, is not something that can be combated by capital investment. It is not by herding our youth into vast factory-like compounds and teaching them all sorts of things which are totally unconnected with their every-day life that education can be promoted. Education is but another word for socialisation. It is the communication of that information to a child that he requires to fulfil his functions as a member of his family and community. Ignorance is but a deficiency in this process. You cannot socialise people if there is no society to socialise them into. In such conditions education is an illusion. Regardless of the capital spent on it, it can do no more than provide children with random information that will interfere with the socialisation process rather than promote it. Once more the solution must consist in decentralising society, reducing mobility and allowing local cultural patterns to re-emerge. When this occurs, societies will be in a position to redesign that educational programme which will enable their youth to be imbued with their specific set of values.

Crime is but one of the manifestations of social disintegration. Its incidence seems to be increasing throughout the industrialised world. In the USA it has become an epidemic as it is rapidly becoming here. Conventional solutions are increasingly unsuccessful. The US government now spends close on to 20 billion dollars a year on burglar alarms, armoured cars, etc. all to no avail. Paradoxically again, crime is largely absent in traditional societies as it is in the remoter villages of the industrialised world where society has not disintegrated and the family and the community are still intact. In such conditions tradition and public opinion are powerful enough to prevent major deviations from the accepted norm. To recreate such conditions must be the only realistic method for combating crime and, this, once more, means de-industrialising and decentralising society.

Disease. In spite of massive investments throughout the world, infectious disease has not been conquered, nor is it likely to be, since our health services are on the whole fighting symptoms and not causes. In addition, a whole new

set of diseases has appeared which are increasingly referred to as the 'diseases of civilisation'. In this category we must include cancer, ischaemic heart disease, diabetes, etc. These are largely absent in primitive societies and their incidence increases in direct proportion to per capita GNP, ie to what we refer to as the 'standard of living'. These diseases almost certainly reflect the terrible stresses which our bodies and minds are subjected to in an environment that differs ever more radically from that to which we, as a species, have been adapted by millions of years of evolution. Man was simply not designed to live a sedentary life in an urban conurbation, to eat chemical foods, drink contaminated water and breathe polluted air, and no amount of science and technology can correct the resulting biological and psychological maladjustments.

The closer we look at the problems that beset our society the more apparent it is that they cannot be solved by conventional technological solutions. Our society appears to be moving in a totally wrong direction. It may be providing us with all sorts of apparent benefits. Few realise, however, that economic growth is a process whereby a new organisation of matter the 'technosphere' or the world of human artefacts is systematically substituted for the 'biosphere' or the world of living things, and that one can only expand by diverting resources from the other. It follows that as the former expands the latter must inevitably contract. Now unfortunately, the biosphere has been developed over thousands of millions of years of evolution and is of the most incredible subtlety and perfection, while the technosphere is crude and rudimentary in comparison. Also we have been designed to form an integral part of the former organisation of matter, not the latter, which means that this substitution is depriving us of our essential biological and social environment. As industrialisation proceeds, all sorts of maladjustments are created, as basic biological and social needs become increasingly difficult to satisfy.

In the USA it is becoming increasingly difficult for urban dwellers to drink non-polluted water. A recent survey shows that even bottled water contains traces of human sewage, as well as unacceptably high levels of heavy metals. At the same time it is increasingly difficult to obtain unadulterated foods. The

average American is said to consume more than 5 lb of chemicals a year, just by eating the normal American diet—which contains more than 3,200 additives, very few of which have been adequately tested.

On the other hand, the basic ingredients of a satisfactory diet are increasingly unobtainable—polysaturated fats for instance, essential for building brain and other nervous tissues, is unstable and almost always eliminated from processed foods while ever fewer urban dwellers have the opportunity to take adequate exercise or get enough sleep.

Man's social needs are also increasingly difficult to satisfy. The family unit cannot survive in an industrial economy in which most of the economic functions normally fulfilled at a family level have been usurped by supermarkets and other vast organisations. Nor can it survive in an economy in which the mother is forced to relinquish essential maternal duties in order to earn money in a job that may take her every day to a place of work often at a great distance from her home. Nor can it survive when the father's normal functions have been usurped by an all-pervading Welfare State that takes over the education of his children, the care of his family's health, and correspondingly reduces his role, his responsibilities and prestige within the family unit. The survival of the community is also very difficult when economic activity on a scale that renders the community redundant as a unit of economic behaviour, and when people are increasingly made to take up residence outside their community according to the requirements of their work.

Economic growth is a device for providing us with the superfluous at the cost of the indispensable.

What then do we do? In January 1972 the *Ecologist* published what has now become a famous document; **A Blueprint For Survival**. It attracted a great deal of attention and has since been translated into 16 different languages. It has also given rise to political parties in New Zealand, Tasmania, and in Alsace, and has at last done so in Britain.

'People' is a new party. It has adopted the *Blueprint* as its basic theoretical statement. It already has 40 active

groups throughout the country and in June is organising a convention to which there should be 1,000 participants. At this election it is putting forward at least six candidates who will contest seats at Hornchurch, Liverpool, Leeds, Eye, and two at Coventry. At the next election it will field 600 candidates.

The *Blueprint* provides a long-term programme for the deindustrialisation and decentralisation of society so as to achieve a stable society. One that is sustainable on the principle that ours by its very nature is condemned to inevitable disintegration and collapse. It is not a policy of despair, but a very constructive programme whose implementation should lead to a society considerably more agreeable than the one in which we presently live. To quote from the *Blueprint*, "There is every reason to suppose that the stable society would provide us with satisfactions more than compensating for those which with the passing of the industrial state, it will become increasingly necessary to forgo. We have seen that man, in our present society, has been deprived of a satisfactory social environment. A society made up of decentralised, self-sufficient communities, in which people work near their homes, have the responsibility of governing themselves, of running their schools, hospitals and welfare services, in fact of constituting real communities, should, we feel, be a much happier place. Its members, in these conditions, would be likely to develop an identity of their own, which many of us have lost in the mass society we live in. They would tend once more to find an aim in life, develop a set of values, and take pride in their achievements as well as in those of their community. It is the absence of just these things that is rendering our mass society ever less tolerable to us and in particular to our youth, and to which can be attributed the present rise in drug-addiction, alcoholism, and delinquency—all of which are symptomatic of a social disease in which a society fails to furnish its members with their basic psychological requirements".

It is only by adopting an integrated long-term programme on the lines of the *Blueprint For Survival* that a painless transition can be ensured to a sustainable and satisfactory society—the alternative is to go on muddling through from one crisis to the next with total social and economic collapse as the only possible outcome.