

# PEOPLE

## A Manifesto for Survival

"Sustained economic growth is the goal of all governments, both left and right wing, in both developed and under-developed countries, and although a diverse array of people have come to realise that in order to survive, growth must be controlled, there is at the moment no political party in the world that would adopt this as its manifesto and expect to come to power by either democratic or other means."

Professor D. F. Owen, who ends his excellent book, *Man's Environmental Predicament* with this rather despairing statement, could be forgiven the inaccuracy contained in it. After all PEOPLE was but a few months old when he wrote it. Today, less than a year after the appearance of his book, there is a political party in Britain (and others in Australia, New Zealand and Alsace) that has adopted, in its manifesto, not merely controlled growth but de-growth, and confidently expects to come to power by democratic means. The first National Party Conference held in Coventry in June 1974, formulated and agreed a "Manifesto for Survival" in which one reads: "PEOPLE intends to work towards a transition from growth-orientated society to one whose guiding principles are—minimum disruption of ecological processes; maximum conservation of materials and energy; a population in which recruitment equals loss; and a social system in which the individual

can enjoy, rather than feel restricted by, the first three conditions."

Regular readers of *The Ecologist* will already be familiar with the history of PEOPLE to date. It was formed in 1973 as a direct consequence of the appeal in *A Blue-print for Survival* (*Ecologist* Vol. 2, No 1) for "a national movement to act at national level, and if need be to assume political status and contest the next general election."

PEOPLE has already fought one general election and is preparing for the next. Another milestone is now reached with the publication of its first official manifesto. Whatever may be its failings it is impossible to over-emphasise the importance of the simple fact that it exists. The fact that, for the first time, a political party has dared to do what all other parties and successive governments have shirked and continue to shirk—to tell the political, economic and social truth. It is of little use that many politicians profess, in private, adherence to ecological views (and it is surprising how many in fact do so) if in public they continue to support the economics and ethics of the consumer society. Of course they plead that ecology wins no votes and so the charade continues. The myth of "progress" is maintained, the self-perpetuating vicious circle created by political promises, and public willingness to believe them, remains unbroken. The nightmare goes

on because they are all afraid to wake up. PEOPLE attempts to speak for those who are not afraid to face the truth, who have shaken themselves free of the dream/nightmare, and are prepared to take on the responsibility for the future.

The Manifesto will not please everyone. For some it will be too radical, for others too conservative. Thus while no immediate reform of the Parliamentary system is proposed, there are suggestions for taxing large farms out of existence and for reducing the optional school leaving age to 14. But these are details and they should not be used as an excuse for throwing the baby out with the bath water. The Manifesto contains the essentials of a sound policy system of de-growth, decentralisation, devolution and population control. Above all it is an honest attempt to provide a working basis for ecological government. It is also refreshingly unpretentious. I quote from the introduction: "PEOPLE does not claim to know all the answers, merely to be looking for them in a new direction."

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Copies of A MANIFESTO FOR SURVIVAL (price minimum 50p) can be obtained from: A. Whittaker, 69 Hertford St., Coventry.

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