

5 YEARS, 50 ISSUES

"THIS MAGAZINE", began the editorial in the first issue of Green Line, published in March 1982, "has grown from a desire within the Ecology Party to see an independently edited and self-financed paper which would serve both the Eco Party and the wider green movement with which it is allied."

It had in fact started as an imaginative response to a decision taken by an Ecology Party Conference in the autumn of 1981 which prohibited the party's national council from further publishing a magazine for members. The magazine had proved costly, and there had been scandals related to the sacking of at least one editor because the council didn't like his politics - he was an anarchist as well as a green. Conference instructed council to assist any independent attempt to launch a green magazine.

It has been a feature of GL - and a basic editorial tenet, perhaps in fact the only one - that the magazine has refused to accept a narrow definition of what green is about. Greens are a diverse group, and GL has always believed that a richness derives from the diversity. Our very first issue had an article by Stephanie Leland laying the foundations of green feminism, and we have always kept ecofeminist issues alive in our pages. Likewise, we have pursued the debate between anarchists and socialists and those who believe greens are neither. Both these areas of interest have aroused intense anger and resentment among some readers: to us, however, only the anger itself seems to be un-green.

The magazine would never have made the early progress it did without the tremendous enthusiasm and creative ability of Richard Hunt, whose cover illustrations in particular included some remarkable works of art. He left in October 1984 with issue 26, when he started a magazine of his own, Green Anarchist. But we turned disadvantage to advantage, and the departure of Richard meant there was space for new people. Gradually the editorial structure of the magazine has changed: more people have become involved, until last year the change was dramatic and it became possible at last to form something like a real collective. There is now a healthy nucleus of people in Oxford with a real commitment to GL. Though work breeds work, and the more we improve the magazine the more work again goes into it. So the collective still welcomes more participants.

We've cultivated an "amateur" look to GL (though at times this has been little more than to make a virtue of a vice!) Last year we were able to use a computer not only to word-process articles, but also to print out the text of the entire magazine camera-ready. It's not our computer, but we have free access to it. This has meant that GL has moved somewhat up-market in its appearance, though one reader wrote and told us that it would be our death sentence. As a result we seem to have broken through something of a credibility gap: suddenly, articles have more interest and merit because they look "typeset" rather than just typed. Doesn't it make you sick?

Other improvements in our appearance have been easier to recognise as progress. We now have five people illustrating articles or doing covers on a regular or occasional basis, and we're

A birthday card from ANDY KAYE, a major contributor to GL for nearly 3 years.

trying to insist on photographs to accompany articles. This month for instance poor Barry Maycock, having completed his armchair interview with Joe Hashman, spent the next weekend out hunt sabbing with camera firmly in hand!

Not all our problems are as easily solved. We're very aware that GL is mainly written by men, and a woman member of the collective is looking at ways of correcting the balance. We're also aware that our circulation, at around 1750, is way below its potential. Our sales through "alternative" bookshops are probably at their limit; we have to live with the fact that most such shops are too "left" to take GL, or simply see us as marginal.

Since we are independent of any one organisation or party, we can't expect local groups of, say, FoE or Greenpeace to sell GL with the same enthusiasm that they will sell their own literature. In fact, the only groups that sell GL, so far as we are aware, are a number of local green parties and several independent student groups. To those stalwart individuals who have been sufficiently committed to the independence and

green free-thinking for which GL stands to take copies of each issue to sell to friends, at meetings and so on, we and the rest of our readers should be ever grateful. Extending our sales will be achieved primarily by increasing the number of subscribers, which is in itself an expensive business. We'd like to hear from any reader responsible for the mailings and/or newsletters of any group, large or small, and who would be willing to enclose a leaflet advertising GL in a future mailing.

The future is open. The potential is enormous, if we had but the energy to fulfil it. We try to be more than "just another magazine", to involve our readers rather than just provide another consumer article for them. In the end the magazine will be and become what we all make it together, and to that extent it will continue to be that rather curious and interesting animal, a reflection of the continuing growth and the undisputed importance of the green insight in all its diversity of thought and form.

What do you think?

• JON CARPENTER

