

# econews

ECOLOGY PARTY NEWSLETTER

Nº 5 November 1979

## No growth in Manchester

The morale of the Ecology Party has suffered a minor blow after a disappointing result in the Manchester Central byelection held on September 27th. In an urban Labour stronghold, Eco candidate John Foster could only muster 129 votes, a mere 1.2% of the poll, and trailed in fifth behind the three major parties and an independent Labour candidate.

As expected, the seat was held by Labour, with a majority of nearly 6000, but few would have predicted that the Conservative candidate would lose his deposit and be relegated to third place by an inexperienced Liberal, whose campaign failed to get off the ground until one week before polling day. The Liberals have no room for complacency however, and those who insist on interpreting the result as the first indication of a long awaited Liberal revival are perhaps being a little credulous: their candidate came very close to losing his deposit as well. On paper, there was a swing of 5.9% to Labour, but given the appallingly low turnout (only 32%) not even the most foolhardy psephologist would venture to draw any firm conclusions from the result.

The byelection is not therefore regarded as a serious setback for the Party, but it has underlined the enormity of the task facing Eco in its quest for political

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*John Foster, looking rather glum!*



*PLATFORM HUMOUR: Jonathan Tyler and Sally Willington share a joke, while Gundula Dorey writes it down in the minutes.*

## Conference approves London office

The Ecology Party has decided to establish a national office to provide the facilities necessary for the party to become a significant force in British politics. The decision was taken at the annual conference in Keele, attended by just over 200 members.

The proposal to set up a London headquarters has long been a controversial issue within the Party, but the decision was reached with surprisingly little acrimony. Some members remain convinced that a national office is the first step towards an inert, bureaucratic organization manipulated from the centre, but the majority were swayed by the persuasive case put by David Fleming, the Party's press officer. Admitting that Eco had, as yet, made little political impact, he said: "The choice now facing us is whether we are to take an effective part in the politics of the nation, or whether we shall be satisfied with a worthy non-polluting leisure activity for a tiny minority of aware middle class people". Without an efficient central office, the Party would be doomed to the latter, he claimed.

In a breathless and impassioned speech he allayed members' fears that he was proposing to centralize the party organization around a London headquarters.

"The office would not be involved in administration but would act as an essential service to the Party, co-ordinating campaigns, developing press relations, and supporting branches," he said. He endorsed a statement made by his fellow NEC member, Jonathon Porritt, that the Ecology Party was opting into national politics as a vital complement to its activities at branch and community level.

The second major controversy of the conference erupted over the resolution from Jonathan Tyler calling for the election of a Party Leader. Tyler claimed that a Leader was needed to act as a national focus and to personify the Party for the benefit of the media, but was at pains to stress the difference between the role envisaged and the hierarchical system implied by the traditional use of the word. Enough delegates remained somewhat sceptical about this distinction to ensure that the resolution was narrowly defeated.

Much of the remainder of the conference was taken up with debate concerning party policy on Land, Defence, Energy, and Employment. In each case the debates, revolving around papers prepared by study groups, were sufficiently inconclusive to ensure that the existing manifesto remained intact. These papers will now be circulated to branches for further revision and discussed again at a spring conference in Manchester.

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## Eco and the wider environmental movement

Alan Clarke considers the relationship between the two

A recurring vision of the Ecology Party is the one that portrays us as the political limb of the wider environmental movement. We have certainly won some of its respect in the last twelve months, as Jonathan Tyler rightly points out in his annual report, but in no way can it be considered that we have, as yet, justified our claim. The question that obviously follows in "Why?"

Well, for one thing, it is clear that many pressure groups and other environmental activists have not been convinced of the validity of our approach to reform through the channels of conventional politics. Even if they do accept it, they still need to be persuaded not to indulge in tactical voting directed against some enemy, rather than in support of anything particularly positive. Another stumbling-block has been the accusation from some quarters — and one that is perfectly understandable — that as a predominantly middle-class body we are fundamentally out of touch with the vast majority of the people, although in fairness that criticism could equally well be applied to other environmental groups.

Our problem, then, seems to be the need to make ourselves more attractive to those who ought, by right, to be our chief allies on the new battlefield of green politics — and in considering who those allies might be we should take as wide a view as possible. Such a criterion should not be difficult to establish,

and we might well end up with a list that, apart from the obvious environmentally-motivated groups, would include feminists, some Trade Unions and the entire anti-nuclear lobby.

Having got this far, what we require is a propaganda campaign that will impress our allies and, at the same time, develop our own public image — always assuming, that is, that we have a clear idea of what we think our public image ought to be. And, of course, it will not do to simply sit back and tell the others what a jolly good lot we really are. We have to show ourselves ready to take up the issues that matter to them — and whenever appropriate we must join in their campaigns, especially those that are organised by "umbrella" organizations that need to emphasize the common ground of their constituent groups.

Logically, this sort of initiative would primarily be developed at branch level, for groups most often get together in response to some matter of specific local concern, but there will obviously be issues that we can approach on a wider footing and our Regions and National Council must also be ready to act. Perhaps what I'm really trying to say is that the real onus is on each one of us individually to ensure that the Ecology Party "gets active" — only the most concerted action has a chance of achieving what we desire.

## Urban ecology

John Foster reflects on his campaign in the Manchester Central by-election

'But, sir . . . for £150, you could have bought a bike!' Thus, bemusedly, one of my pupils on the morrow of the Manchester Central by-election. At the time I couldn't help feeling that he had a point.

We mustn't waste time seeking consolation in percentages. 1.2% of the poll could be made to sound respectable — it's not so much less than the average Eco percentage in May (1.5%), and given the social composition and voting habits of the constituency, something less than average was certainly to be predicted. But we need to represent the facts to ourselves in the starkest possible light. After a campaign during which an address was delivered to every household, some 15% of the 31,700 electorate canvassed directly, and fair coverage obtained in the local media, we could still muster only 129 people prepared to vote Ecology. Nor is there any comfort to be derived from the appallingly low turnout; for if two-thirds of the electorate decided, as they did, that no-one was worth voting for, then they were deciding too that even our message of change and hope was irrelevant.

So by any serious political standards, this result must count as a dismal failure. Only if the Party faces that fact will our efforts — and many people worked very hard — be turned ultimately to profit.

We must surely ask ourselves now whether it is worth our while to contest seats like Central. In financial terms alone the price is prohibitive — each of those 129 votes cost the Party about £4.50. Then there is the psychological cost — the sheer sickness at heart that comes from meeting blank, unshakable loyalty to Labour's short-term definition of the

issues on doorstep after doorstep. Oughtn't the energy of our few active members be directed towards more creative tasks? Moreover, what publicity we achieve recoils to our disadvantage after a derisory vote; we are reconfirmed as a 'fringe' party of well-intentioned cranks, and the vicious circle of media disregard is reinforced — certainly at national level.

On the other hand there is the bleak truth that unless we can gain significant support among the disadvantaged socio-economic groups, of which the Central electorate is composed almost exclusively but which are of course substantially represented in every other constituency, then we can kiss goodbye to any hope of winning Parliamentary seats.

And what about the 'community politics' which served the Liberals so well in Manchester this time, bringing them second place and an 8% increase in their share of the vote? Do we agree that it is an essentially dishonest approach, or do we secretly (or even openly) envy it? In either case, what are we going to *do* about it?

These are now crucial questions for the Party. Meanwhile in Manchester we can enjoy the campaign retrospectively. I recollect with especial glee the man who asked me, absolutely poker-faced, whether if he voted Ecology he could have eight wives; and the single white lady in a street of beautiful but uncomprehending Pakistanis, who listened carefully to my pent-up polemic, and then informed me in a thick Polish accent that being an alien she had no vote. Campaigning is certainly fun.

Except that we aren't in it for fun, are we?

# Spring policy conference

A conference devoted solely to the discussion of party policy is to be held at Manchester University on the 11th, 12th and 13th April. The policy conference, which may become an annual event, is the key element in an ambitious new system of policy formulation adopted at the recent conference in Keele.

The drafting of policy papers for discussion at Manchester will be co-ordinated by Wiltshire member Digby Dodd, who has been appointed to oversee the scheme. The papers, intended to eventually replace the policy sections in the existing manifesto, will be prepared by working parties consisting either of a single branch, or individuals from several branches. Before the New Year, an initial draft from all the working parties will be sent to branches; a second draft, incorporating comments received, will then be prepared by the end of March and circulated throughout the Party prior to discussion at the policy conference.

The system may appear a little unwieldy, but it has the inestimable advantage of allowing the membership to be actively involved in the formation of party policy, rather than merely rubber stamping documents prepared by the National Council. It should also ensure that specialist knowledge and experience within the branches is not left untapped.

## ACTION

Could all branches or individuals interested in participating in this scheme please contact the National Policy Co-ordinator, Digby Dodd immediately, stating which of the following policy areas they would like to take on: Public Administration and Government; Decentralization; Population; Social Welfare; Education; Agriculture and Food; Natural Resources; Northern Ireland; Overseas Aid; Building and the Built Environment; Employment and Industry; Pollution; Transport; Foreign Policy; Economy; Energy;

Defence; and Animal Welfare. Please indicate if you have any specialist knowledge of your chosen field. Papers on Land, Energy, Defence, and Employment are already in various stages of preparation, but the working parties concerned would welcome any contributions on these topics. In addition, working parties have recently been set up on Transport and Taxation. The Taxation group was established at a fringe meeting during the Keele conference, and according to the convenor, David Kemball-Cook, it will attempt to work out the fiscal measures necessary to fund and complement other areas of Eco policy, and to construct taxation policies "that are both consistent and coherent". Members interested in contributing ideas on this subject should contact David at 59a Hackford Road, London, SW9 0RE. (01 582 7116). The Transport working party is being co-ordinated by Phil Foggitt, at 25A Hilltop Road, Oxford, OX4 1PD. For all other policy areas, please contact the Policy Co-ordinator direct, as soon as possible. His address is: Digby Dodd, Sparrows Barton, Easton, Corsham, Wiltshire, SN13 9QD, Tel. Corsham 713208.

## YOUR PARTY NEEDS YOU!

Volunteers are required for the following posts:

- 1) EDITOR of Econews.
- 2) EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS for Econews.
- 3) ADVISOR(S) on ARTWORK AND LAYOUT for Econews. This job may be combined with that of the Editor.
- 4) PARTY TREASURER to take over the management of National Accounts.
- 5) MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY to take over the work of the present Secretary, which involves 15-20 hours a week.
- 6) A PRODUCTION AND MAILING BRANCH to arrange the printing of Econews with a local printer, and to undertake prompt wrapping, addressing and despatch every other month. This needs one person in the branch capable of organizing a large volume of simple repetitive work quickly.

The above positions are unpaid, but expenses (telephone, postage and travel) may be paid by the National Council. A payment could be made to the Branch funds of the Production and Mailing branch.

Applicants should send details of their relevant experience to Anne Rix, 90 High Street, Heathfield, East Sussex, not later than November 30th.

Also required are volunteers to enter their names on a DIRECTORY OF NATIONAL COUNCIL HELPERS. People offering their services will be asked to give details of their abilities and times available on a form, so that they may be approached when a job likely to suit them needs to be done. Forms are available from Anne Rix at the above address.

## Council meets

The first National Council meeting following the conference was held at the Central Hall, Westminster on Saturday 21st September.

The main business of the meeting was definition and allocation of jobs, election of officers, and discussion of how the National Council could best organize itself to carry out the heavy workload in the coming year.

Details of the working parties set up by the meeting, and of the new office holders on the National Council, are given on the back page.

The next two meetings of the National Council will be held on November 17th and 18th in Bristol, and on December 15th in London. Any paid up member is welcome to attend either of these meetings - further details from John Wareing, the Assistant National Secretary.

## Byelection (cont'd)

credibility. The result has also led some members in the Manchester area to question the wisdom of contesting inner city seats, but others feel that the Party must achieve a breakthrough in the depressed urban areas before it is to have any chance of political success.

R. Litherland (Lab) . . . . .	7494
A. Parkinson (Lib) . . . . .	1502
S. Lea (Con) . . . . .	1275
S. Ala-ud-din (Ind Lab) . . . . .	187
J. Foster (Ecology) . . . . .	129
W. Boaks (PSDMWR) . . . . .	12

See page 2 for John Foster's personal analysis of the byelection campaign.

## Manifesto reprint

John Luck has arranged for a further reprint of the 'Manifesto for a Sustainable Society' which should be available by October 22nd. Members who have already placed orders for the Manifesto should receive them within ten days of this date.

This edition will be in a loose leaf format to allow future amendments to be made without having to reprint the whole Manifesto. Revised sections will be on sale separately in due course. Orders should now be sent to P.O. Box 30, Norwich, please. (See back page for details.)

## Somerset byelection result

Stuart McIntyre, Taunton membership secretary, contested a Somerset County Council byelection on September 13th, polling just over 7% of the vote. The predominantly rural seat was retained by the Conservatives with 57% of the poll, with the Labour candidate gaining 34%. Roger House, the branch secretary, expressed satisfaction with the result, adding that the party had not previously been active in the ward. "The branch is now looking more closely at County Council affairs in readiness for the 1981 elections".

## Welsh Regional conference

The first Regional Conference in Wales will be held on Saturday 24th November at Town Hill College of Further Education in Swansea. Besides discussing the administration of the region, the conference will hear Dr Pat Howells a local member, speak on 'The Politics of Nuclear Power'. Other sessions planned, include one on Rural Depopulation, and another on transport. The conference may continue on the following Sunday: further details from Chris Hall, 7 Heol Ddu, Treboeth, Swansea. (Swansea 76363).

## Residential courses in Wales

The Centre for Alternative Technology is holding a series of residential courses in the coming months, at least three of which are likely to be of particular interest to Eco members. These are: 'Philosophy of Alternatives' (November 16-18), 'The Politics and Future of Work' (December 7-9), and 'Human Ecology' (February 8-10). Other courses

available cover such diverse topics as solar power, insulation, heat pumps, blacksmithing, ecological land management, and last but not least, compost toilets! Booking forms, and full details from Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth, Powys.

## No Act of God

The South Devon branch of the Ecology Party recently held a highly successful public meeting in Paignton on the dangers of nuclear power. Over 130 people turned up to watch a film entitled 'Nuclear Power - No Act of God', and to hear Teddy Goldsmith and Peter Bunyard of 'The Ecologist' debate the issue with two representatives from the CEGB. Branch Secretary David Abrahams said that contributions and questions from the floor clearly indicated the depth of feeling against the proposal to build a nuclear power station in the South West, and added that the Ecology Party would be in the forefront of the campaign against nuclear power in the region.

## Comtek festival

For the first time, Eco was represented at the annual Comtek festival of alternative technology, held this year in Milton Keynes. The Ecology Party stall was a considerable success, according to one of the organizers, Geoffrey Syer, and was visited by many of the 5000 people who attended the festival.

## Barnet branch

The inaugural meeting of the Barnet and Finchley branch will be held sometime in late November. Could all members in the area please get in touch with Tim Cooper, 18 Everleigh Road, New Barnet, Herts. (01 449 8297)

## Tyler bows out

Retiring chairman Jonathan Tyler received a standing ovation from the annual conference in recognition of his contribution to the Party's development over the past three years.

In an emotional valedictory speech, he paid tribute to his long suffering family and colleagues for their support during his term of office, and closed the conference with a quotation, which for him, expressed the essence of our cause: "Ecology is caring today about tomorrow."

A vote of thanks was moved by Keith Rushworth, and the conference demonstrated its gratitude by prolonged applause. Jonathan will now be taking a well earned respite from eco-activism, but is expected to rejoin the fray before too long!

## Anarchy is not a theory of the isolated individual

Dear All,

David Fleming's article on anarchism didn't really do justice to anarchist thought. Some anarchists have asserted the right of individuals to carry out their every whim, but more usually, anarchists have emphasized the responsibilities that come with freedom. They have stressed the responsibility not to hurt each other. This qualification of the right to free action parallels our responsibility not to harm the biosphere, and also stresses the importance of the relationships between individuals. Anarchy is not a theory of the isolated individual. Rather, it is a social theory which examines the links between the individual and social institutions. It refuses to sacrifice the individual to any abstract grouping of people, and asserts that human affairs can be organized without complex institutional controls. Thus anarchy draws attention to the individual and his/her potential, but also emphasizes social existence, and offers an organizational theory.

Anarchists do not seek the abolition of social controls, but rather to internalize them. Thus alongside self-exploration and self-expression is set self-discipline. Anarchists have believed that if enabled to explore within, individuals would find their actions guided intuitively, by a moral imperative. Because of their mystical nature descriptions of these beliefs are invariably ambiguous, hence the confusion.

Public institutions would remain in an anarchic community but these would be decentralist and designed to prevent the concentration of power. The beauty of the anarchist position is that it recognizes both the good and the bad - giving the former the freedom it needs to flourish but curbing the other (in theory at least).

The anarchists' concern with politics has been to remove restrictive political practices in order to create a tolerable background for the real business of living. Thus they have always been interested in the simple pleasures of life and in lifestyles which are now described as 'ecological'.

Anarchists have also been concerned with the relationship between ends and means seeing them as a continuous movement. The end cannot justify different means; the individual in the present cannot be sacrificed on behalf of an abstract vision of the future. The right means ought to feel right now.

The real revolution has been understood by anarchists to be a transformation of values. Change must therefore start with the individual and anarchists have usually tried to put their beliefs into practice.

The present spectrum of 'alternative' ideas encompasses anarchism, eastern

religion and mysticism, and ecology. That these interests should arise simultaneously is not accidental. These bodies of knowledge are linked by a common method of learning, one which recognizes the role of intuitive thought — the holistic vision. These various concerns appear to be coalescing into a new holistic vision which integrates many things. As they come together their similarities become more apparent and their differences throw light on each other — but rarely conflict. A new outlook emerges which links individuals to their inner beings, to their fellow human beings and to the biosphere which was the vehicle of their creation. This philosophy allows infinite individual variations upon its theme, indeed it cherishes them provided only that they are not coercively expressed — for it abhors dogma. The gradual diffusion of this new knowledge offers hope of a better future for mankind — provided that it happens fast enough.

Sincerely,

Ian Barlow,  
5 Montrose Avenue, Bristol.

## A positive and viable political philosophy

Dear Editor,

Anarchism is a positive and viable political philosophy. It is not merely a product of a centralised state system, a negation of government and laws, as the article 'Sowing wild oats' suggests, but is a conception of society as an organic network of people, groups and associations, the primary unit of which is the individual. The work 'network' is important because it implies the potential for communication with all other units in the society. Isolated communities are vulnerable. The state, whether it is a dictatorial or an enlightened and protective one, assumes a dependent mass of people. Dependent for its morals, education, actions, information, and even entertainment.

In the development of a politics of ecology, the education policies should be the first to be worked out. Do we envisage as our ideal, the education of: a person who is willing to relinquish some or many of their main human functions to an abstract authority, who is ready to be controlled 'from the outside', or: a person who has internalised the functions of the state i.e. has self control motivated by understanding and sensibility, but more than that, who is in dynamic contact and co-operation with the natural world? If the second, what use does the state have?

Yours sincerely,

Paula Williams,  
Old Snape House, Snape, Near Woodhurst  
Sussex.

## Means and ends

Dear Editor,

Attending this year's AGM at Keele, I was relieved to discover that others were also keen to keep the party's post-election momentum going. However I consider that our progress is in jeopardy if we (a) allow anarchic tendencies to become dominant, (b) confuse our goals with the means by which we achieve these goals. The decision to press ahead with a first office in London was a realistic response to a tricky problem, yet it highlighted the uncertainty which many people felt as to the direction in which the party is going. Is our organizational structure becoming too centralist? Are policy decisions being taken democratically?

I feel such anxiety is not only unfounded but actually harmful to the party. We are attempting to build a political party able to produce the ecological society of the future — to do this we need an efficient, streamlined and proven structure which will carry us through a harsh political climate. We must not remain a small intellectual elite — we have to grow into a party with mass support. To achieve this we have no choice but to fight the enemy on its own ground, and on its own terms. As a political party, we know where we want to get to, so let's worry less about methodology and concentrate more on getting the job done.

Yours sincerely,

Phil Foggitt,  
25A Hilltop Road, Oxford.

## Conferences: costly and undemocratic?

Dear Sir,

The Brighton branch feels that the party should take another look at Clause 6 (i) of the constitution. "... The party shall hold an AGM and Conference which shall be the supreme policy making forum of the party. Its procedures shall be governed by Standing Orders, which shall include provision for voting to be representative of the party at large."

At present policy is determined purely by those members who can afford the fare and time to go to conference — and this in a party which purports to believe in grass roots democracy and proportional representation. Since this is both costly and undemocratic, we feel that a very good case can be made for policy making to be decided by postal ballot of all members. Specifically, motions will be sent to the branches and any amendments would be collated and the reformulated motions sent out again. Having once more discussed these in their branches, members would register their personal vote by post.

But failing the above, at the very least, those voting at conference should be

properly delegated with clear instructions from their branch. The number of votes a branch had would have to be proportional to their paid up members.

We would welcome comments, as we intend to put forward a motion on this subject at the policy conference in the spring.

Yours,

Val Collett, Sec. Brighton Branch,  
16 College Terrace, Brighton.

## Green Christmas?

Dear Sir,

One of the most frustrating problems I have found in trying to get the Eco message across to my relatives, friends, colleagues and acquaintances is their lack of understanding of exponential growth curves and the consequences of exponential growth of population, pollution, mineral consumption and fertilizer use etc. Consequently I have decided this year that instead of sending cards and material gifts at Christmas, I shall be sending copies of 'Limits to Growth', 'Blueprint for Survival' and the Eco manifesto. I think I may then look forward to an interesting and argumentative New Year.

Yours,

Ken Smith,  
Brookfield, Moortown Road, Nettleton,  
Lincs.

## Archaic squabble

Dear Econews,

We are the only political party in this country to recognise the fact that continued economic growth will lead to total disaster. All the other parties believe in economic growth; all believe that happiness is a pound note, that the aim of politics is primarily to provide more material wealth for the electorate. They only differ in how that wealth is to be distributed. We alone acknowledge that their unanimous policy is impossible to achieve and deadly to try. In comparison to this gulf between us and all the others, the difference between left and right is not just tiny, it's irrelevant. From a practical point of view, we are still a very small party and need to grow urgently. We need to attract everybody who shares our awareness of the World's predicament, without ruling out those who are on one side or the other of a political spectrum that was relevant to our parents but has now paled to insignificance. Without forgetting our commitment to democracy, let's forget this archaic squabble and get down to work. There's plenty to be done.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Vickers,  
The Dower House, Butleigh,  
Nr Glastonbury.

# Growing ecologically

Richard Slaughter sums up the mood of the conference and reports on the two major debates of the weekend

The Keele conference was an intense experience which few of us who attended it will quickly forget. A welter of impressions remain: moments of tension and frustration as technicalities impeded the debate, deeply felt differences of opinion, procedural and organisational problems. Yet balancing these were moments of profound unity, vision and shared purpose, the delight of friendships renewed and insights deepened, the exhilaration which arises from attempting something new and vitally different.

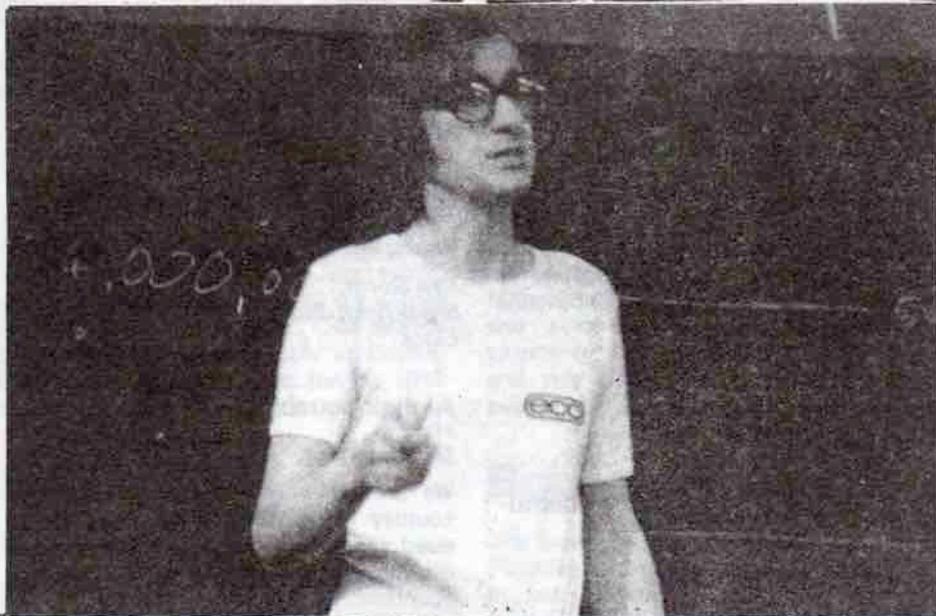
The central theme of the conference was undoubtedly the problem of how to reconcile our commitment to decentralisation with the practical consequences of

models, that if we are aiming to bring about a decentralised society we should not begin by compromising our basic principles, and that if we put these principles into practice we should not need a leader in the conventional sense.

When the resolution to appoint a leader was put to the vote, it failed to obtain the two thirds majority required for a constitutional change. The actual numbers were 95 for the resolution, 92 against it, so there was a fairly even divergence of opinion on this issue.

The proposal to establish a party office had, of course, been simmering before the actual conference, and I had the feeling that a majority of those attending

problem of *where* an office should be, it was pointed out that given the present structure of our society some better arrangement was needed in London to deal with the press, the other media and overseas relations. The crucial consideration seemed to be that a *national* party has national functions to perform, and that at present, dislike it though we may, London is probably the best place to accommodate these. With regard to the cost of such an office it was pointed out that (a) the money will not come out of existing funds but has yet to be raised, and (b), that when properly established it should become a significant *source* of income.



David Fleming, winning the argument for a central office

our growth in size and status. This theme was seldom absent but it was debated at length, and with considerable passion, in relation to two major issues: the desirability of having an elected leader, and the proposal to establish a party office.

The case for having a leader seemed to rest on three major considerations. Firstly, that it is no longer desirable or practicable to expect one person to carry the workload and combine the sometimes conflicting requirements of NEC (now National Council) chairman *and de facto* "leader". Secondly, that for the party to function as an effective organisation, some measure of leadership is required. Thirdly, that outside pressures and requirements will cause a *de facto* leader to emerge anyway, so we might as well exercise some choice in the matter. Against this were the views that ECO should be seen to be different, and ought not to slavishly follow conventional

were initially against it, particularly if it were to be in London. The arguments put forward were similar to those noted above. On the one hand (if I may perhaps risk oversimplifying), were the out-and-out idealists who, armed with the South West Region's proposals for the decentralisation of administration and a deep suspicion of anything looking even halfway "centralist", argued forcefully against an office. On the other hand were those of a more pragmatic outlook who pointed out that the present workload was becoming intolerable, and that if we wanted to develop as a truly *national* party beyond the present stage, then an office was vital. Others sought a compromise and argued that office *functions* could and should be farmed out to the regions. The problem with this seemed to be that such an arrangement would be both cumbersome and costly, although not everyone agreed with this. On the

## Convincing

In the end the conference approved an office by majority vote, and, albeit reluctantly, that this be located in London for the time being. It seemed to me that a good number of people changed their minds about this simply because the arguments in favour of a London office were the most convincing. As someone pointed out, it will only be the first of many, it will at this stage attempt to serve the whole party, and it should complement rather than hinder the moves to decentralise regional administration. It struck me as significant that ECO must be the only party that would agonise over such a decision! I find this heartening, but we must clearly take care that such soul-searching does not become too self indulgent and inward looking.

The outgoing NEC certainly didn't get everything it wanted and neither did the more vociferous idealists. I'd like to think that this reflected the growing maturity of the party. Most of us understand that there are no simple solutions and that compromises are unavoidable. We can also try to stop thinking in simple dichotomies: it is not "centralist" to want a London office, it is not necessarily "decentralist" *not* to want one. The world we live in is more complex than this and there are always more than two options.

The basic message of the conference for me was this: if we want a better way of life then there are some things that are much more important than offices or leaders. Certainly we should not abandon our principles, but to apply them effectively requires that we listen to other people and develop greater trust and tolerance among ourselves. Some of us came close to forgetting this at Keele. If we forget it as a party we will not need an office or a leader.



Richard Holme

## The myth of democracy

Proportional representation and electoral reform

Support for proportional representation as a first step towards a more genuine democracy has always been a part of Ecology Party thinking and Conference was fortunate in having secured the services of Richard Holme, Director of the Campaign for Electoral Reform, to address the Saturday afternoon session.

The speaker concerned himself initially with the anomalies of representation under the existing system, from the absurdity of "safe seats" to the bias of a majority Government elected with only 44% of the total vote, and went on to outline different methods of proportional representation as practised in other countries. He also criticized the two major parties, who benefit most from the present system, for their refusal to put the interests of the country at large before the interests of their own parties. "Binary logic," Mr Holme commented, "is fine for computers, but not for a political system."

Following the lecture, Mr Holme was invited to join a smaller seminar group for further discussion, allowing members to ask questions and attempt to establish the part that PR had to play in the future development of the Ecology Party. Although one member disrupted the discussion to a degree by arguing in favour of "first past the post" voting, the general mood was one of considerable sympathy for the CER'S work — particularly their campaign against deposits for elections — and any misgivings on the theory of PR were in the main concerns over the extent to which PR could satisfactorily democratize our society, given the nature of representative voting as an obstruction to full participation.

With this reservation, most Eco members felt that the C.E.R. was worthy of our support as a significant step towards greater democracy.

Alan Clarke

## A year of progress and achievement

Gundula Dorey notes the highlights of the AGM reports

In presenting his Chairman's report of a year which has seen Eco leap from obscurity into being hailed by some as Britain's fourth political party, Jonathon Tyler clearly found it difficult not to touch on all aspects of the Party's development and consequently gave a very detailed account. He showed that at a time when people were beginning to experience a marked change in attitude born out of an increasing awareness of the limitations of the conventional idea of progress, the Party had been presented with the opportunity to grasp the public imagination. Through the Election it had achieved recognition, credibility and respect. He saw its main immediate task as consolidating that position, which in his view could best be achieved by a balanced division of labour between branches and the centre.

A ripple surged through Conference when he made a clear reference to his support for a central office and for the election of a Party Leader, both of which had still to be debated. Sally Willington in her National Secretary's report sparked off more feeling by her similar reference to the need for an office, and her strong condemnation of its critics. In other respects her report was uncontroversial; it ranged over the year's activities and

achievements, the administrative difficulties of the secretariat in efficiently servicing the massive expansion of the Party into regions and branches, and ended with a plea for better internal organisation.

Peter Sizer's main point in his Treasurer's report was that despite all the ravages of the Election the Party had managed to stay solvent. Conference expressed some dissatisfaction that full accounts were still with the auditors and could not be presented, but accepted his report.

### Vote of thanks

Three other reports, from Jonathon Porritt on the Election campaign, David Fleming on Press relations (described from the floor as like wrestling with a large blancmange) and Biff Vernon, lighthearted, on the present state of membership, (now approaching 4000) were all well received. Jonathon spoke of the positive side of the Election in having provided a clear focus, a public platform and an 'enemy', but drew attention to the divergence between sympathy and votes and stressed that the next time would be considerably more difficult. Much would depend

on the Party's impact during the interim period. His account was warmly received and he was given a personal vote of thanks for his work in co-ordinating the campaign.

Finally, after discussion, two resolutions



Biff Vernon.

were carried, one from the Merseyside Branch to remove the Party's account from Barclay's Bank, and one from the NEC to adopt Standing Orders for the conduct of Conference. It had been a long session but what came over most clearly was the sense of satisfaction that hard work and co-operation had eventually brought its rewards.

# Politics and power

Petra Kelly's talk on German ecopolitics earned her a standing ovation from conference. Alan Clarke reports

Variety is still the spice of life and, by the time Petra Kelly appeared on the Conference platform on the Saturday evening after a long day of constitutional wrangles, variety was undoubtedly what the members present required. She met the challenge admirably and provided a stimulating introduction to German ecopolitics — a breathless combination of humour and gravity that earned her the warmest reception of the weekend and a final standing ovation before the necessary exodus to the campus bar.

An employee of the European Commission, Ms Kelly is an active supporter of the German feminist, anti-nuclear and environmental movements and is a leading figure in the *Burgherinitiativen*, an amalgam of approximately 3000 Citizens' Groups with a combined membership of almost a million that has drawn together feminists, environmentalist and pacifists under one influential umbrella.

The German nuclear programme has reached a more advanced stage than our own, and this was reflected in the speaker's remarks about the attitudes of nuclear authorities and employers to individuals within the anti-nuclear movement. Demonstrators are repressed by the threat of the *Berufsverbot*, a political stigma that debar entry into the public services, and police, unable to cope with the size and frequency of demonstrations, resort to brutality in order to assert their authority over crowds such as

imposed on demonstrators picked out of the crowd at random by the police at the Brokdorf rally.

Against this turbulent background, the German "Green List" ecology parties, collectively named *Die Grunen*, have been in action this year in the European elections with a strong uncompromising programme emphasising feminism, health and the anti-nuclear issue. Although the national average was only 3.2%, some way short of the 5% required for representation at Strasbourg, it is surely significant that in areas close to nuclear reactors the green vote moved well into double figures. (For example, the 14.4% quoted by Nick Hildyard in *ECONEWS* 3 for the district of LuchowDannenberg, an area that has endured much bitterness and tension over the proposed reprocessing

In concluding this report, I must confess to a degree of curiosity over the depth of feeling shown at Conference for Petra Kelly, despite her overwhelming bravura and charm, for it was clear that the anti-



nuclear movement in Germany is significantly more militant than its counterpart in Britain. It was also apparent that *Die Grunen* do not share our occasionally neurotic taste for "respectability", or the science of trying to please everyone at once. If the reaction of Conference to Ms Kelly was genuine, we may soon be shedding some of our "niceness" in favour of the more radical path that our philosophy demands.



plant at Gorleben, plans for which were abandoned by the Lower Saxony Government earlier this year.)

Although *Die Grunen* did not gain any seats in the Euro-Parliament, green candidates from Denmark, Holland and Italy did; and with the aid of a few vociferous supporters have succeeded in disrupting sittings in Strasbourg — and in stealing the limelight from Ian Paisley!

Returning to the political situation in Germany, the speaker described their Trade Unions as "hopeless", collaborating with the Government to promote nuclear projects with a touching faith in the old formula of energy=growth=jobs. (In fact, the story of the German Trade Unions' commitment to nuclear power makes interesting reading. See for example Lothar Meyer's article "The Mafia and the Maverick", *New Ecologist* No. 3, 1978.)

## Anti nuclear campaign

The National Council has been instructed to initiate an anti-nuclear campaign as a matter of urgency, and to align the Party with the anti-nuclear movement nationally and internationally. A composite motion on nuclear power, containing these proposals, was unanimously approved by the conference. Speaking from the platform, Jonathon Porritt said that the Ecology Party would continue co-operating with other environmental and trade union groups to set up a national Anti-Nuclear Campaign, which would be officially launched at an inaugural meeting in November.

The conference also passed a resolution from the Merseyside branch supporting the aims of the General Election Coordinating Committee for Animal Protection, and a motion from David Pedley opposing the closure of small schools.



those to be seen at Wyhl in Southern Germany, often numbering tens of thousands. Other displays of official heavy-handedness were reported by the *Burgherinitiativen* in a statement to the press last year — as an example, they claim that fines of up to £1000 were



*Jonathon Porritt: re-elected to the National Council*

## New faces on the National Council

In a surprisingly low poll, Jonathon Porritt easily outstripped the other candidates contesting the NEC postal election. Sally Willington, and Gundula Dorey were also re-elected, with the fourth place on the now renamed National Council won by newcomer Linda Hendry from Edinburgh.

With only 16% of the membership bothering to vote, the result cannot be taken as an accurate barometer of Party opinion, but the re-election of three members of the outgoing NEC is being interpreted as a forceful affirmation of the direction in which the NEC has steered the Party over the last year. The election of Linda Hendry, previously unknown outside the Scottish Region, came as something of a surprise, not least to some of the unsuccessful candidates, but reflects a growing desire within the Party for more female representation on the National Council. Linda's forthright manifesto also ensured that she attracted the votes of the 'radical decen-

tralist' wing of the party.

In addition, the conference decided to elect four more members to the National Council, at least two of which should not have previously served on the NEC. David Fleming, an unsuccessful candidate in the postal election, topped the poll on this ballot, and thus retains his seat on the Council. He was joined by Anne Rix, Steve Whitaker, and the colourful Sid Raule, a well known figure in the alternatives movement, who was described by one delegate as "living propaganda for the ecological cause".

The two elections have thus achieved a successful balance between the 'old guard', and the new blood welling up from the branches. Whilst the re-election of four members of the outgoing NEC offers a welcome continuity with the past, the new faces on the National Council should ensure that it continues to be a vital and inspirational catalyst for the party's development.

Peter Frings

## Constitutional changes

Most of the proposed amendments to the Constitution (other than the leadership issue, reported elsewhere) were carried with little discussion, although a few provoked comment. In the item concerned with regionalisation, Linda Hendry preferred the term "area" to "region" in referring to Scotland and Wales, and an amendment to this effect was carried. David Fleming's amendment allowing for 4 members of the newly named National Council (which replaces the old National Executive Committee) to be elected from the floor of Conference was carried, which results in a total of 8 nationally elected members in addition to the 13 regional representatives. (There are 6 representatives at present - 7 regions are not yet sufficiently organized to elect one). Conference also decided that there will no longer be a lower age limit for membership - anyone however young, with the maturity to subscribe to the philosophy of the party will now be eligible to join. However, despite an impassioned plea by Jonathan Tyler for its removal, the three year rule, relating to the length of time a member may serve on the National Council, will remain. Rumours had been circulating that Jonathan was promoting the removal of the rule because he was affected by it this year - he was at pains to point out that no alteration would cause him to change his mind about retiring.

## Dual membership

A resolution about dual membership provoked considerable reaction as it appeared to commit the Party to lengthy and inquisitional voting procedures. Eventually, only a proposal barring prospective election candidates from membership of any other party and preventing any candidate from another party joining Eco was carried. A subsequent resolution permitting expulsion from the Party was also supported, with the proviso that the annual conference should have the right to reinstate anyone it considered unjustly expelled.

The conference also accepted a resolution requiring the National Council to nominate a Party Treasurer - this appointment would be subject to confirmation at the next conference.

## Kleptomania

Of the thirteen Manifestos made available for reference at Conference no less than ten have disappeared without trace. John Luck would appreciate the ten absent minded members responsible sending him £1 each immediately.

# Urban land neglected

The paper on land policy provoked lively discussion. Peter Frings reports

After a lively but somewhat disjointed debate, the paper on land policy was referred back to the working party for further revision. It is to be discussed again at the Spring Policy Conference.

The paper was introduced by Jeremy Faull, who reiterated the fundamental aim of an ecological land policy: "Land should satisfy the population's needs with regard to food, energy, natural resources, housing, industry, amenity and recreation as fully as possible, without diminishing its ability to provide at least as much for future generations". He defended the viewpoint that agricultural colleges and planning authorities would have a crucial role to play in the administration of such a policy. "These institutions can only behave according to their *briefs*", he said. It was this fact, rather than the institutions themselves, which was to be blamed for the present misuse of land.

## Approval

The paper received broad approval from many delegates, and Biff Vernon, exasperated by the refusal of conference to take any action on the previous policy papers apart from referring them back to the working parties from which they originated, immediately proposed that the paper should be adopted in its entirety, and substituted for the existing land section in the manifesto. Other delegates counselled caution however, and the conference, in no mood to take such drastic action, rejected the proposal. In some disarray, Biff withdrew to his corner, exuding frustration.

The subsequent discussion touched upon a wide range of topics, including the role of Land Stewards, nationalisation, and the responsibilities associated with land ownership. Nationalisation was decisively rejected, being regarded as both impracticable, and an obstacle to good husbandry. Similarly, there was little disagreement over land ownership — the conference accepted Jeremy Faull's view that agricultural land in particular should not be owned by speculators or foreign investors, but by private individuals, partnerships or co-operatives. The proposals relating to Land Stewards, however, were more controversial. According to the discussion paper, their duties would be to ensure that land was 'used properly', to inspect property and require the rectification of 'misuse', with the ultimate sanction of enforced sale if owners refused to comply with instructions.

In addition the Land Stewards would eventually take over the functions of the local planning authority, land agents, the M.A.F.F., and rating authorities.

Many members were disturbed by the prospect of these apparently draconian powers being vested in such a small group of largely unaccountable people, but were partially mollified to learn that Land Stewards would be subject to election every five years. They would also have wide experience in a land related profession, and in some as yet unspecified manner, be responsible to the local community.

## Premature

In one respect however, the debate surrounding the role of the Land Stewards was both premature and redundant, since the fundamental question of exactly what constitutes misuse of land was left

unresolved. Simple platitudes about organic farming are clearly insufficient — as more than one delegate pointed out, we also have to tackle the issue of land in urban areas, a subject wholly neglected by the paper presented to conference. The first priority for the working party on land policy must surely be to draw up guidelines for the use of land in particular situations — it is only within such a framework that 'misuse' can be defined. This point was echoed by delegates who suggested that branches should consider investigating the role and utilization of land in their own particular locality. Comments on this subject, and on the issue of land in urban areas should be sent to the working party on land policy via the Policy Co-ordinator, Digby Dodd. (Address on back page.)



Leslie Spoor introducing the defence debate

# No consensus on defence

Liz Sigmund sums up the defence debate

The discussion paper on defence was eloquently presented to conference by Leslie Spoor, who emphasised that he had been away and therefore not taken part directly in compiling the document. One paradoxical conclusion reached by the authors, Stewart Biggar, Steve Whittaker and Brian Spoor, was that 'It is both foolish and arrogant to assume that ECO can prescribe the correct policies simply by sitting round a table and

discussing them' — conference then proceeded to try and do exactly this!

The underlying assumption was that 'Our aim must be the protection of our territory' with which many delegates did not agree. One suggested that we should be better occupied learning Russian, while another felt that, if we left it all to the 'workers', they would far rather be friends with all the world than fight

over a capitalist country like ours.

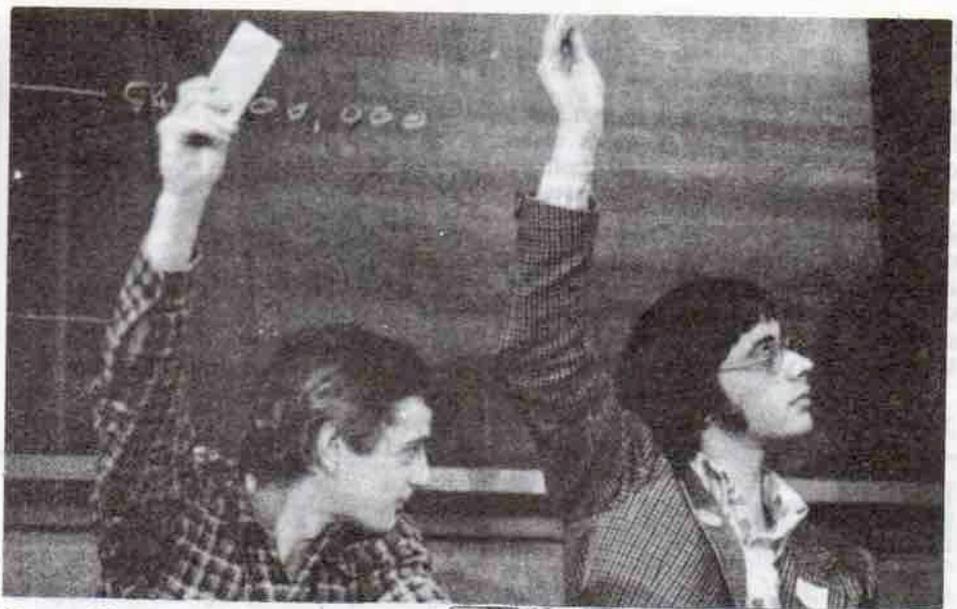
However, as the paper points out, if we move to an ecologically based, non-growth, stable economy, there will be many societies around us with the desire to crush such dangerous concepts. The ambiguous point was made that we must move away from a policy of 'total security' (I like the assumption here) and formulate other strategies to 'deal with likely contingencies'.

The ensuing debate centred around two powerful fears — first, of the weapons in current fashion (i.e. nuclear, chemical and biological) and second, of the danger of exposing ourselves to attack and takeover by Russia because we had no weapons.

In the middle was a small group of male enthusiasts who had studied the concept of a mobile guerilla force — or citizen's army — which could harass an occupying army sufficiently to make them wish they had never won the war. As one delegate said 'We should be constantly on the move and so they couldn't hit us'. (May a mere woman remind ECO that families containing the very young, pregnant women and old people would therefore be constant targets for reprisals?)

## Disarmament

An impassioned plea for total disarmament and pacifism came from Sean Thompson (London) which carried the majority of us along. The sanity and morality of this stance is so obvious and clear; however, the equally impassioned (though less popular) pro-nuclear deterrent speech from Keith Rushworth (Leeds) carried the weight of current defence thinking behind it, and must be considered in the light of an insane and immoral world.



Stewart Biggar and Steve Whittaker, co-authors of the defence paper

The two conflicting sides were irreconcilable, and the only conclusion reached was that conference should refer the proposals in the defence paper back to the working party for further revision.

One disquieting paragraph in Steve Whittaker's contribution to the discussion paper — The Communist Threat — suggests the replacement of the nuclear deterrent with 'something a little more comfortable'. What sort of comfortable deterrent can we imagine?

Does he seriously consider that chemical and biological weapons could supply that need more "comfortably"? It would certainly take somewhat longer for people to die. 'Not with a bang, but a whimper'.

The US, UK, and USSR are fully prepared to fight the initial stages of a war with these so-called 'conventional' weapons

already, so Steve had better think again!

The most disturbing element in this debate was the lack of knowledge of the delegates on the common-place state of defence policies at the present time. Some of the suggestions made come from fairyland, and sounded as if all the Ecology Party needed to do was to manufacture science fiction for some future in which the party will have taken over.

The defence debate could have interested the press — it could have engendered original and honest debate on current defence policy. This is a crying need for Britain now. The flights of fancy which the conference indulged in were a disgrace in a dangerous and desperate world, which is longing and searching for positive and sane political thinking from somewhere.

That opportunity was there, and we dropped it down the drain.

# Employment or work?

Basil Mager outlines the course of the Employment policy debate

In jointly presenting the Conference with a ten-page paper on the Economics of Employment, the London Region and the Bath Branch suggested it should be discussed in full at the Conference for reference back to the Working Party. As everyone must have forseen, the issues raised were so diverse and wide-ranging that it was impossible to do justice to them in a single session.

Multinational companies came in for criticism, and there seemed to be a general feeling that they should be broken up, as should unational monopolies. A member pointed out that in the U.S.A. units broken up in one State opened up in another.

Suggestions from the floor were (1)

that any company over a certain size should be made into a co-operative and (2) that 51% of control of every company should be vested in the employees.

## Technology

Teddy Goldsmith made an impassioned plea which seemed to be against all technology, but surely there is some confusion about what is meant by technology. It is not only nuclear power stations, petro-chemical complexes, Concordes and the like but a method of doing things: a paleolithic flint arrow-head is a piece of technology which gives a desired result when the arrow is fired and hits its mark — food.

One member suggested using micro-processors to carry on the fight against big technology. This is a discussion that will go on for a long time in the Party.

The discussion document gives an 'ideal definition of work': that it should be available for everyone who wishes to work, socially useful, environmentally sound and personally satisfying and should provide a reasonable standard of living.

Discussion of the vital questions of remuneration and how to match these requirements with jobs led to several suggestions: link work with ownership, study Scott Bader etc. There was general agreement that there should be work-sharing — but how? Conference was

divided over the question of a community wage for everyone, and went on to a discussion of small businesses.

One was left with the feeling that there is a tremendous amount of work to be done to formulate practical policies that will be acceptable to the electorate.

The Conference debate, like most discussions on employment, was gloomy. Happily nothing was said about 'the problem of educating people for leisure' but the unarticulated premise was that the reduction of toil is a menace.

There seemed no realisation that when

socially unnecessary work has been eliminated (and most of the work in industrial countries is socially unnecessary), when machinery is doing most of the dirty and dangerous work, and when the remaining toil has been evenly shared among all the able-bodied, there will be time for people to do what they like: time for travel, for sport, for the arts, for study; time to devote to children, to teaching, and to every kind of creative work, the only constraints on these activities (apart from the obligation not to harm others or the environment) being those imposed by the availability of resources.

## Energy debate

The Energy debate almost didn't happen! Much of the earlier business was running late, and for a while it seemed that the debate on energy policy would have to give way to other matters. However a compromise was devised whereby about half the members present at the conference were able to discuss Energy policy for about half an hour, while the other half concentrated their minds on Electoral Reform and other subjects.

In these circumstances it was perhaps not surprising that most points were only touched upon, and very few found real debate. In the light of some uncertainty over the production of radioactive waste from fusion reactors, one of the first questions raised was whether we should adhere to our policy of cautious acceptance of further research into nuclear fusion. The issue was left unresolved, but agreement was reached on the need to discriminate between short term and long term policies, and to give conservation measures priority. The problem of motivating people to use less energy was raised, and the thoughtlessness of people in their consumption of energy (and water and other resources)

was recognised. A number of ideas to overcome this were floated, and it was widely felt that education of the general public in energy matters is a priority.

It was also suggested that in formulating policy we should look towards the kinds of institutional changes necessary to convert our society to increasingly energy efficient ways.

As far as energy supply is concerned, it was suggested that we should advocate the maximum use of the known available technology, e.g. coal in place of fast breeder reactors, and that other sources such as energy crops should be investigated. We should also advocate energy discrimination: i.e. matching energy sources to operating requirements, such as electricity for motive power, but not for space heating.

In conclusion it was agreed that an Energy Policy working party be set up to prepare definite policy proposals for the Spring Policy Conference, with particular reference to (a) North Sea Oil, (b) major conservation policies and (c) Nuclear fusion.

John Luck

## East Kent Eco paper?

Alan Clarke keeps up to date with branch activities

Members in East Kent are considering the possibility of producing an Eco newspaper that can both respond to current affairs and create useful publicity by focussing on matters that might be ignored or underplayed by other news media. The idea was raised in a vague way at Conference last month and, in theory at least, seems to be attracting more and more attention, for the South West is to consider a similar proposal at its forthcoming Regional Conference (see below). The Kent project would probably start off as a monthly publication in the South East and it will certainly be interesting to watch its progress. Somehow I don't see us posing any serious threat to Sir James Goldsmith and NOW!

Jonathon Porritt, our new National Chairman, has been busy with recent lectures to groups in Reading and Sevenoaks. Later this month, the Reading branch are to have a talk from Dr Whitfield of Reading University on the subject of alternative energy. Next door in the London Region a press release to mark Laurence Hills' speech in Enfield on September 21st was published in three different newspapers.

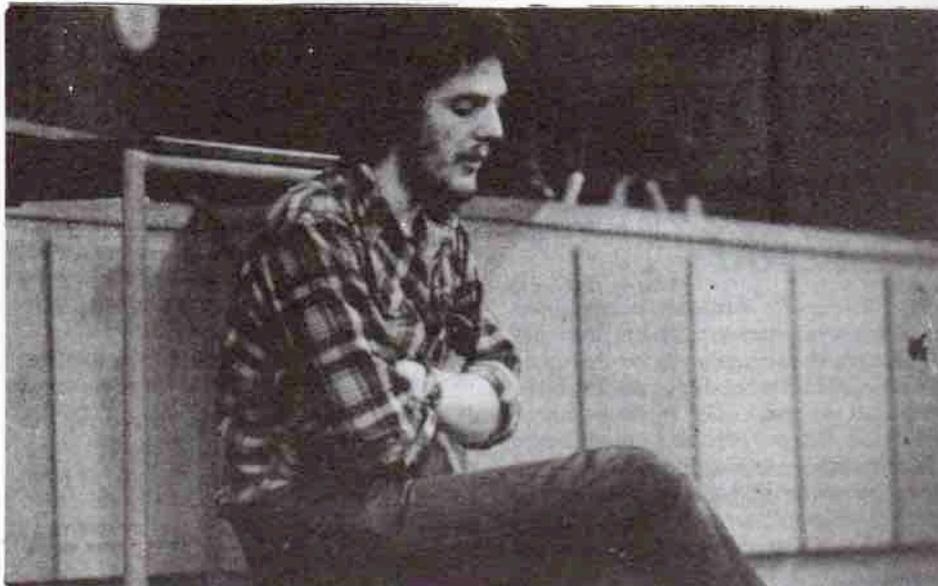
There was a note in ECONews 4 of a new branch in South Buckinghamshire — Jonathan Cooper is acting as both Chairman and Secretary and his address is 1 Lent Green, Burnham, Bucks (Tel. Burnham 3498). Basil Mager, the Co-ordinator for the region adds that new branches have also been formed in the Isle of Wight and South West Surrey.

## South West

Following the general trend of the Region, the Somerset branch has begun to reorganize itself and now has active constituency branches in Taunton, Yeovil, Wells and Bridgwater, although for the time being membership is being dealt with by Taunton for the county as a whole. Somerset is one of the selected areas for possible dumping of nuclear waste and Garth Muton, writing in the branch newsletter, urges members to participate in the debate at all levels. Already, Geoff Garbett (ECO candidate in Taunton last May) has appeared on local TV programmes in protest against the proposals.

Two new branches are now functioning in Gloucestershire: Cheltenham is being organised by Alan Richards, 25 Sandford Mill Road, Cheltenham, and Gloucester itself by Rosemary Chinn, 22 Church

Brian Spoor — the policy debates take their toll



Drive, Quedgly, Glos. And Frances Long, described in ECONews 4 as Plymouth branch contact, now has a new address: 8 Whitefield Terrace, Greenbank, Plymouth.

## Regional Conference

Having already accepted the recommendations of the Somerset Working Party Report on Regional Administration, the Region now has to implement its proposals, requiring, inter alia, quarterly Regional Administrative Conferences. The first such Conference will be held at Exeter Public Library on October 20th, starting at 11 am, and items to be discussed will include plans for a Regional Office, bulk distribution of ECONews and the future of the Region's printing press, purchased with the assistance of a loan from the National Executive Committee — or National Council, as it has now become.

Latest developments in the Yorks and Humberside Region are revealed in its September Newsletter. New branches are being formed in Scunthorpe, Pudsey and Horsforth, Scarborough and Pickering, Whitby, and Grimsby and Cleethorpes, although the last named of these groups is still without an organiser. Anyone wishing to undertake this task should contact Mike Sellars on Boston Spa 2652 or Geoff Dixon on Caistor 851485. Geoff is temporarily looking after the area from his branch in Caistor (East Midlands Region).

## Wales: two new branches

News in of two new branches, making the total for Wales up to five, if my arithmetic is to be trusted. The Aberystwyth and District Branch was formed on September 5th with a steering committee — contact John Baxter, Dept of Law, UCW, Aberystwyth. Newest of all is the Lampeter and District Branch, formed on September 13th — their secretary is Maggie Culver, Fort Farm, Bettws Bledrws, Lampeter, Dyfed.

VALUES PARTY  
**vibes**

Read Vibes, the bimonthly newspaper of the New Zealand Values Party. Sample issue from Heinz Dessau, Court House, The Green, Brighton. 50p inc. postage.

# Confused liberals

Jonathon Porritt on the Liberal Party conference

Rumour from Margate has it that the Liberals have at last burned their boats, gone ecological, and at a stroke dispossessed the Ecology Party of any grounds for pursuing a separate course.

As usual, rumour hasn't quite got it right. So here are the facts:

1. For some time the Liberal Party has been flirting with ecology, but that until now this had resulted in more than the "wet nothing" debate at last year's conference.
2. The Liberal Ecology Group has certainly been growing in terms of membership and influence; some senior liberals are themselves passably ecological, and many individual members (including quite a few candidates) subscribe to beliefs that are identical with our own. The Young Liberals' growing concern is particularly interesting.
3. There is genuine concern within the Liberal Party at the expansion of the Ecology Party, and many now see us as a real threat.
4. At this year's Annual Conference in Margate, a Young Liberal motion rejecting economic growth as the solution to our problems, was passed with some ease, despite dire warnings from Richard Wainwright who described it as "defeatist nonsense." The resolution pointed to the increasing scarcity of non-renewable resources, and emphasised the imbalance of economic power in the world and people's growing disillusionment with consumerism. It called on the Liberal Party to recognise that economic growth is neither achievable or desirable, and to develop an alternative economic strategy which takes into account the need to conserve resources, provide socially useful work, and move towards greater global economic equality.
5. However on the very same afternoon, another motion was passed endorsing all sorts of policies totally incompatible with the no-growth motion passed in the morning!

The Press made almost nothing of it the next day, dismissing it as an example of typical Liberal irresponsibility. And certainly, on the basis of such flimsy evidence, there is nothing to persuade us to lay down our arms and leap into bed with the nearest Liberal!

We should remember that the Liberal Conference is not necessarily representative of the Party as a whole. Time after time, the majority of Liberal members and almost the entire Parliamentary Liberal Party have reiterated their adherence to growthist policies. Whatever Conference may do, there is little likeli-

hood of this changing in the immediate future; there is indeed a strong likelihood that this motion will get lost in the apparently imminent Liberal revival, and may be rejected by their candidates as Wainwright predicted, as an unpopular millstone.

By passing such a motion, the Liberals have officially arrived at the same point, in terms of economic outlook, as the Ecology Party (or 'People' as it was then known) found itself in 1973. But as yet they have put forward no one single policy to make their no-growth stance even remotely workable. They rely



entirely on received wisdom (some of it perhaps ours?) when talking about a stable-state sustainable economy — I even have my doubts that all of those who voted for it a Conference understand the full implications of what they have done!

There are, moreover, many important differences remaining between ourselves and the Liberals — as I took some joy in pointing out when addressing a special Ecology teach-in on the first day of the Margate Conference! Free trade, the Third World, the restraints on individual freedom, population, technology, Defence and even energy — these are all areas in which each Party has radically different policies.

Nonetheless the Liberal Party has changed, and, in changing has really grown up. To have acceded the demise of economic growth and to have pledged their Party to find ways of adapting to a post-industrial society must be seen as an improvement. It is also a vindication of one aspect of our present strategy, that is to work as hard on the Liberals as on our other political opponents, to challenge them wherever and whenever we can, so that our continuing growth and influence literally forces them to become ecological. It is no reason for us to relax our commitments in other areas. We still have one hell of a job to do!

# Towards a housing policy

Ian Barlow argues that we should give more attention to housing problems

SHELTER reports an increase in the number of requests for help from people suffering poor housing conditions. At the same time a gloomy picture is emerging regarding buildings erected in the 1950s and '60s. A recent editorial in the Architects' Journal described these buildings as "a national disaster". It continued, "new housing stock should be an addition to a nation's wealth, but this housing



is a drain on our resources." Throughout the country local authorities are demolishing dwellings — usually blocks of flats — which have not yet been paid for. The Conservative Government's spending cutbacks mean less council building and less grant aid for householders. Contrary to Tory expectations there is no sign of a revival of private housebuilding either — rather the reverse. At present political debate on housing appears to revolve around the sale of council houses. However SHELTER highlights the continuing existence of bad housing and its consequences of misery and bad health. The fact is that, far from being solved, our housing problems have merely been pushed aside and ignored.

The Ecology Party, along with the rest of the 'ecology movement' (or whatever your preferred label is), is arguing, firstly, the *need* to adopt a more basic material standard of living and, secondly, that this is an *opportunity* to enrich our lives by switching our attention to the non-material rewards of being. Thus our philosophy aims at protecting the planet Earth (and thus future generations of human beings) and at improving the quality of life for each individual — and this must mean *every* individual. In our (almost evangelical) role of denouncing waste and excess consumption we run the risk of forgetting that there are many, in this country, who do not have a 'decent' material standard of living — that poverty still exists. In asserting the

joys and possibilities of alternative ways of, and attitudes to, living we must not forget that such enjoyment presupposes an adequate supply of material basics. If we wish for, as we do, a society satisfied with such basics we must ensure that they are available to all. This important aspect of a 'caring society' is, I believe, the meeting ground of eco-politics and conventional socialism. The traditional concerns of radical groups throughout history with the problems of poverty and the distribution of wealth remain ours — albeit examined in a new light. We must find them a place within our overall philosophy, and it should not be a peripheral place. A fundamental difference between us and 'industrial' socialism is that whereas the latter postulates an expanding supply of material wealth we are demanding the opposite. We want less not more, nonetheless we have to ensure its fair distribution and thus many of the concerns of socialism remain ours.

Shelter is one basic human requirement which must be properly met if a decent

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"There are many people in this country . . . for whom poverty still exists"

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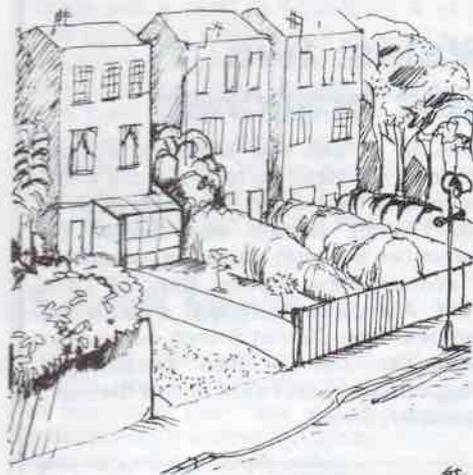
human environment is to be created. The 'home' is a focal point for the activities of the individual. Many factors contribute to the creation of a home and there are many kinds of home but the physical environment which encloses the activities of the home can do much to shape their success or failure. The decent house forms a back-drop to the home's activities; a bad house intrudes itself into the awareness of its occupants with problems of damp, cold and even physical danger, thus stunting the activities of the home.

These thoughts convince me that the Ecology Party should be addressing itself to the housing problem, which must be examined alongside more general issues relating to the built environment. This conviction is strengthened by the knowledge that the nature and quality of our built environment has a marked effect on the size of the burden we place on the planet in order to meet our requirements of warmth and transport.

In the hope of initiating a discussion within the Party on housing and associated issues I have prepared a discussion paper on the subject. We need, in this area as in most others, definite short-term policies as well as long-term aspira-

tions. I believe that we shall require a Government commitment to spend massive amounts of money in order to improve the quality of our housing stock. David Fleming has pointed out, rightly, the dangers of schemes which rely on the formal economy (Econews 3). Fortunately in the case of housing, many of the problems could be short-term. Thus leaning on the formal economy may be acceptable as a short-term measure to solve these problems — although it becomes more difficult as time passes. Management of the economy and fiscal policies of various kinds appear to underlie so many of our proposals that it is essential to crystallize our ideas concerning the functioning of a sustainable economy and how to set it up. Insofar as a holistic approach allows us to 'begin' anywhere, we need to start our reappraisal of the Party's policies with the economy.

In the short-term Eco policies on housing need not be radically different from those of the other parties; rather it is the strength of our commitment to ensuring access to, and control of, a decent home for all which must differ. In the long-term, if other Eco-policies to create new decentralised government structures are effectively introduced, housing provision would



no longer be a function of central government. Thus although housing policy will be shaped by the development of other Eco policies, we ought nonetheless to be making an issue of it now. Copies of the discussion paper are available from me at:

5 Montrose Avenue,  
Redland  
BRISTOL  
BS6 6EH

Comments of all kinds will be gladly received — both on the contents of the paper and on related issues not covered in it. (An S.A.E. would be much appreciated).

# Schumacher's best work?

**Good Work.** E.F. Schumacher, £4.95, Jonathan Cape.

"When you travel up the big motor road from London you find yourself surrounded by a huge fleet of lorries carrying biscuits from London to Glasgow. And when you look across to the other motorway, you find an equally huge fleet of lorries carrying biscuits from Glasgow to London. Any impartial observer from another planet would come to the inescapable conclusion that biscuits have to be transported at least 600 miles before they reach their proper quality."

The absurdity inherent in modern industrial society is a recurring theme in this volume, a compilation of essays and lectures unified by their relevance to questions of the nature and purpose of work (but also embracing such diverse horrors as "surrogate bread" and the erroneous metaphysic guiding current schoolteaching practice).

With a levity absent from his previous publications ("A journalist asked, 'Mr. Gandhi, what do you think of modern civilisation?' And Mr. Gandhi said, 'That would be a good idea.'"), Schumacher again penetrates the superstructure of 20th century society and questions its foundations. The crucial liberty governing the relationship between an individual and his work, for instance, ought to be not the present British Government's notion of freedom — essentially negative and superficial, consisting of freedom from bureaucratic interference, from high levels of income-taxation, etc — but rather a positive freedom, involving self-development and ultimately ego-transcendence ("liberation from our inborn egocentricity"). Radical changes in the technological base of our work must occur if humans are to contribute as persons rather than as "puppets"; "intermediate technology" is viable, and 'Good Work' is peppered with case histories of successful human-scale technological ventures.

Modern industrialism, with its runaway technology, is *the* all-pervasive societal ill. To check it, priority must be given to ending mindless pursuit of the bitch goddess: "it is *not* of decisive importance whether democratic arrangements 'work' better or worse than undemocratic enterprise; they *are* better, because they are more in line with the meaning of human life than any wealth-producing machine — however successful — that is based upon and motivated by the acquisitive instinct . . . the moment we allow the economic calculus to invade *everything*, then nothing becomes worthwhile any more". Far more important for human well-being than expertise with facts and figures (the quantitative) is concern for values (the qualitative); modern educators should be asking questions about the

ends of human life (by teaching philosophy and religion) not be content merely to provide answers concerning *means* (by teaching science and technical skills) to an end largely shaped by 17th century views no longer valid — namely, materialistic scientism and a Cartesian desire to be 'masters and possessors of nature'. Schumacher's argument brings out clearly the significance of Einstein's

aphorism, 'Science without religion is lame'.

There is little in 'Good Work' to offend ecological thinkers; nor much to startle those who have read Schumacher's earlier books. If not his Best Work, this is certainly the most readable, and for that reason well worth a look.

Keith Taylor

## Bookworm

**Rural Resettlement Handbook** (2nd edition).

£1.80 from the Rural Resettlement Group, Manor House, Theltham, Diss, Norfolk.

This revised and greatly improved handbook from the Rural Resettlement Group is an encyclopaedia of indispensable facts and figures for any potential urban refugee. Although rural resettlement implies a commitment to changing the present structure of society with its current bias towards centralization and urbanization, the book restricts itself to information, and is not concerned with the immediate political implications of these issues. It is described on the back jacket as "a tool for those who are thinking of moving to the countryside, for those already there, and for those who share a concern about rural problems." A glance at the chapter headings gives some indication of the scope of the book: how to decide which area to move to, choosing a house, looking for land, subsistence farming, agricultural training, job opportunities in rural areas, possibilities for self employment, legal frameworks, the experiences of other individuals and groups, parish politics, transport, rural health care. . . Each section contains a list of possible sources of money, advice, or assistance, and there is a comprehensive directory of useful periodicals and organizations. Don't flee to the countryside without it!

**Teknosis:** John Biram, £4.50, Arlington.

What is teknosis? Author John Biram has coined the word to refer to "all noxious or nefarious aspects of technology and scientific thought".

"Teknosis is a combination of technology, money (or other power form) and male intelligence. Men's aggressiveness, type of intelligence, objectives and beliefs are the principal generators of teknosis. Women may, of course, become teknotic and condone or applaud teknosis, but they seldom originate it. Women are not much tempted by wide political powers, war, mechanical equipment or weapons, systematization, science or logical analysis".

He describes some symptoms of teknosis in technologists themselves: neglect of

non scientific faculties or skill; the belief that human problems have exclusively technical solutions; a tendency to view human beings as objects, Nature as an enemy to be conquered, brains as computers, intuition as suspect, religion as superstition, art as entertainment, and society as an engineering complex. Members of the public may also be infected by the disease, and display teknotic symptoms such as neurosis, acquisitiveness, alienation, escapism, and insensitivity. Surprisingly enough, this untrained attack on the prevailing scientific world view comes not from a woolly minded idealist, but from an insider who for many years supervised research projects for NASA, was on the fringes of the Secret Service, and involved in the manufacture of nuclear weapons! (His conversion to a more ecological viewpoint was in large measure due to the influence of Robert Graves, who contributes a foreword to the book.)

Like all prophets, he is guilty of exaggeration and misrepresentation, but there is no denying the validity of his central message: that the only hope for western 'civilisation' lies in a revolution of mind and spirit and a resurgence of poetic, matriarchal values. A well written, delightfully iconoclastic book which should be of interest to all political ecologists.

**A Nuclear Ireland?** John Carroll and Petra Kelly (eds). £3 from John Carroll, I.T.G.W.U., Liberty Hall, Dublin 1, Ireland.

This book consists of a collection of essays and scientific articles first presented at an Energy Symposium organized by the Irish Transport and General Workers Union in Dublin earlier this year. Both pro and anti nuclear viewpoints are represented, and the contributors include Dr Alice Stewart, Michael Flood, Dr Ernest Sternglass, and Petra Kelly. Among the topics covered are the effects of low level radiation on the worker, the threat to civil liberties, EEC energy forecasts, and the potential for alternative energy sources in Ireland. The I.T.G.W.U. has taken a strongly anti-nuclear stance and hope that this publication will make "a useful national and international contribution" to the debate surrounding nuclear power.

# NOTICEBOARD

## NATIONAL COUNCIL

- DAVID TAYLOR:** 13 St James' Square, Bath, Avon. 0225 319434. (South West Region Representative, Vice Chairman).
- STEVE LAMBERT:** 3 Howard Road, London, E17. 01 520 0676. (London Region Representative).
- KEITH RUSHWORTH:** 8 The Mount, Alwoodly, Leeds 17, W. Yorks. 0532 672198. (Yorks & Humberside Region Representative).
- PETER DRAPER:** 49 Granville Road, Limpsfield, Oxted, Surrey. 08833 4161. (South East Region Representative).
- JOHN FOSTER:** 52 Alness Road, Whalley Range, Manchester 16. 061 226 4667. (North West Region Representative, Campaigns Organizer).
- LESLIE SPOOR:** 55 Clermiston Road, Edinburgh, The Lothians, EH12. 031 334 1510. (Scotland Region Representative).
- JONATHON PORRITT:** 57 Hamilton Terrace, London, NW8. 01 286 6695. (Chairman).
- SALLY WILLINGTON:** 278 Battersea Park Road, London, SW11. 01 223 8574. (National Secretary).
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- STEVE WHITAKER:** 7 Panmure Place, Edinburgh, EH3 9HP. 031 229 5072.
- JOHN WAREING:** 329 The Green, Eccleston, Chorley, Lancs. 0257 452 928. (Parish Councillor, Assistant National Secretary).
- JOHN LUCK:** 20 Military Road, Rye, East Sussex. 07973 3404. (Town Councillor).

## CAMPAIGN MATERIAL

The following items are available from ECO, PO Box 30, Norwich.

- Election posters: 12p each.  
General posters: 12p each.  
A5 Publicity leaflets: 50p per 100.  
Introduction to the Party leaflets: £1.00 per 50. (Includes registration forms.)  
Registration forms: 25p per 50.  
Stickers: 14p per sheet of 6.  
A4 Letterheaded paper: £1.00 per 100 sheets.  
A5 Letterheaded paper: 80p per 100 sheets.  
A6 Letterheaded paper: 60p per 100 sheets.  
1" Badges: 8p each.  
1½" Badges: 10p each.  
1¾" Badges: 15p each.  
The Real Alternative: 15p each.  
European Election Manifesto: 12p each.  
The Reckoning: 20p each.  
The Little Green Book: A tenant's manual to the planet. (Produced by Vole for the Green Alliance usual price £1): 70p.

For orders over £1.00, postage and packing is free. For orders less than £1.00, please include 10p.

## REGIONAL ORGANIZERS

- Scotland:** Stewart Biggar, 22 Montague Street, Edinburgh, EH8 9QX. 031 667 4932.
- Wales:** Peter Rout, 82 Grays Gardens, Craig-y-Rhacca, Machen, Newport, Gwent, Wales. 0222 861352.
- Yorks & Humberside:** Mike Sellers, 3 Spenscommon Lane, Tadcaster, Yorks. 0937 842652.
- North West:** John Wareing, 329 The Green, Eccleston, Chorley, Lancs. 0257 452928.
- North:** Bill Dixon, 56 Snebro Road, Whitehaven, Cumbria. 0946 2895.
- West Midlands:** Joe Benett, 59 Selly Park Road, Birmingham 29. 021 472 2406.
- East Midlands:** Dave Whitebread, 8 Firtree Walk, Groby, Leicester. 0533 879320.
- East Anglia:** Tim Pye, 39 Lyndhurst Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk. 05028 1600.
- South East North:** Dean Wayland, 4 Yarmouth Road, Stevenage, Herts. 0438 68177.
- Greater London:** Jean Lambert, 3 Howard Road, London E17. 01 520 0676.
- South East South:** Basil Mager, 1 Whitelodge, Collington Lane West, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex 04243 2908.
- South West:** Richard Carder, 76 Lower Oldfield Park, Bath, Avon. 0225 24531.

## PARTY OFFICERS

- Membership Secretary:** Biff Vernon, Anwick Fen, Sleaford, Lincolnshire. 052 6860 215.
- Enquiries Secretary:** Libby Smith, c/o Flat 1, 217 Unthank Road, Norwich, Norfolk.
- Policy Co-ordinator:** Digby Dodd, Sparrows Barton, Easton, Corsham, Wilts. (Corsham 713208)
- National Council Minutes Secretary:** Peta Bailey, Flat 2, 6 Elsworthy Road, London, NW3. 01 722 3024.
- Treasurer:** Peter Sizer, 9 Sherbourne Terrace, Clarendon Street, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. 0926 29875.

## NATIONAL WORKING PARTIES

The National Council has established six working parties to look into various aspects of Party organization and administration. Any member interested in contributing to, or actively participating in any of these is invited to contact the appropriate convenor.

**Fundraising** (To finance party office and national campaigns) Contact Jonathon Porritt, 57 Hamilton Terrace, London, NW8. 01 286 6695.

**Conference** (Standing Committee on all Party Conferences). Contact Pam Lunn, 3 Forge Road, Kenilworth, Warwickshire. 0926 56900.

**Election Procedures** (At conferences). Contact Adrian Williams, 56 Highbury Grove, London N5. 01 226 3561.

**Voting Procedures** (At conferences) Contact David Taylor, 13 St James' Square, Bath, Avon. 0225 319434.

**Econews/other regular publications** Contact Steve Whitaker, 7 Panmure Place, Edinburgh. 031 229 5072.

**London Office** Contact Jonathon Porritt.