

eco

THE RECKONING

Policies and consequences
for Britain now

ecology party

The Reckoning

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JUST to begin with, let's forget about the future. There's more than enough to think about right now.

* Like how can we keep down the cost of living?

* And how can we reduce taxes?

* And how can we create more jobs?

Well, we could go for more economic growth. It's the usual answer. It's what the main parties are agreed on. And it's worked in the past.

There's only one problem. It isn't working now. And the politicians of the main political parties don't have the slightest idea what to do about it.

The reason for that is simple enough. They don't like to think anything has changed. They would rather play yesterday's politics, than come to terms with today's real life. They don't want to be confused with the facts.

The present stagnation and unemployment in Britain is just part of a world recession which, in spite of short term fluctuations, is tending to deepen.

It will mature into a major recession, with massive unemployment, threatening Britain's ability to purchase food and essential supplies from abroad.

No one knows how long this will take. It might be five years; it might be thirty. But very many people now admit that it will happen, that the first signs of the coming change are with us already, and that none of the ordinary policies will stop it.

So perhaps we ought to consider doing something out of the ordinary.

We could create jobs of a kind that won't be forced out of fashion by recession and automation. We could develop new industries to make sure we have the things we need when we can't rely on imports.

We could grow more of our own food, develop new sources of energy, conserve raw materials, deal with pollution at source, and cut down on waste.

These are some of the things we could do. But do we want to do them?

Yes, if we want to have a decent way of life in the future, and if we want to tackle the problems in the only way that will work.

Will we do them?

Yes, if people in Britain join together to bring politics back into real life.

Problem

Usual policies

ECO policies

1. EMPLOYMENT

We're on a trend of rising unemployment and deepening world recession. In more and more industries, automation is doing the jobs that used to be done by people. We must automate if we are to compete abroad. Yet the unemployment it brings is intolerable. So are the falling living standards that must result as the earnings from fewer and fewer jobs are shared among more and more people.

Go for more economic growth—even though the rate of growth would have to reach totally unrealistic levels even to keep unemployment down to the level we have now. Concentrate on giving employment to school-leavers—but leave the rest of their lives to chance. Pretend that taxation and welfare payments can offer long term solutions. Fail to read the signs—that the industrial state will not be able to provide mass employment and high living standards for much longer, however the government may try to “work the system”.

Create the jobs that need the people. Build up sound industries to provide the food, housing, clothing and household goods that we shall need in the future. Shift dependence away from imports, abundant materials, energy and transport, and towards manpower, skills and craftsmanship. Put the heart back into industry and the pride back into jobs. Develop the methods that will continue to provide employment as automation takes over on the production line. Respect the right to earn a living, unconditionally.

2. IMPORT/EXPORT

Britain is finding it harder and harder to pay her way. Why should the developing countries sell us food and raw materials for goods and services which they are learning to supply for themselves? We must face the coming recession: the big one that the politicians don't tell us about.

Go for more economic growth, again. But that's not going to help when the big price crash comes, affecting the manufactured goods and services which now pay for the food and raw materials we need. The economy can still grow in the *volume* of output—but it's already reaching limits in the *value* of foreign exchange it can earn. As our purchasing power declines, our exports—and those of other developed countries—won't be earning enough to buy the food and supplies we need from abroad. The usual call for more economic growth simply raises false hopes, and paralyzes effective action.

Plan now for the time when we shall have to fend for ourselves—when we shall have to supply most of our own food and resources, because we shall have no money to buy them from abroad. Recognise that the manufacturing and service industries cannot finance the whole cost of rising unemployment, since this would only accelerate the rate at which Britain is priced out of world markets. Instead, everyone should have the right to a job in building up the self-reliant economy, aiming at increasing independence from the contracting industrial state.

Problem

Usual policies

ECO policies

3. RESOURCES

Yes, it's true, resources are being used up quickly – though it's not as simple as that. The minerals are unevenly distributed; we must expect OPEC-like cartels to form. Certain of the scarcest minerals cannot be substituted without abandoning whole technologies. As mined ores become poorer, more and more energy will be needed to extract them, and some of them will become prohibitively expensive.

Don't think ahead. Suppose that the price and availability patterns of today are here to stay. Leave it to the "market mechanism". Leave an exhausted, polluted desert to later generations.

We should adopt a comprehensive programme of waste-reduction, and revise our idea of capital: it is our stock of primary resources, which will become ever more expensive to buy, and which should not be spent as if it were income. With unemployment on a rising trend, the incentive is increasing to build up the decentralised, self-reliant economy, based on the conservation of resource capital; to develop local self-sufficiency, and to return money to its true role as a means of exchange, rather than a reward for stimulating ever higher rates of consumption.

4. INFLATION

Britain is earning less and less from exports. But British people need more and more money to maintain a constant standard of living, and to pay for the growing dole queues. The difference has to be made up by fleecing us all and by spending more than we earn: it's called inflation – it's a way of not facing up to becoming poorer.

Prices and incomes policy: it's like sitting on a safety valve. And manipulation of the economy – so that the trend of falling living standards slows up just before elections. But people are beginning to notice what's happening. And they're beginning to wonder if there's a real solution.

Create a way of life which we can afford. Create a stable society in which more people take part in providing the goods, food and supplies that we all need; in which direct action and caring local communities take the burden from the state and taxation. Build on the resources and skills of British people. Reduce dependence on the tottering international financial system.

Problem

Usual policies

ECO policies

5. INDUSTRY

It's not just the English Disease — industry is under assault in all the developed countries: more and more is expected of it, while its ability to deliver wanes. It must become more efficient to compete abroad — yet it must bear the burden of taxes to finance the dole queues, and it must create and preserve jobs wherever it can. The need to improve efficiency and the need to supply jobs are in growing conflict with each other.

Compromise. Between overmanning and technology. Between manufacturing goods to earn foreign exchange and meeting the needs of the home market. The risk is that we shall have an industry which is able neither to earn foreign exchange, nor to compete with overseas competitors in the home market, nor to provide jobs.

Build up jobs in essential industries to provide food and goods for which we now rely on imports. But free exporting industries from the growing burdens of overmanning and excessive taxation to ensure that they remain competitive in world markets. Encourage small businesses geared to local needs. Restore people's confidence in their ability to fend for themselves and their families.

6. ENERGY

Oil and gas are on the way out. Nuclear power may be on the way in — even though scientists don't know how to handle the wastes, and operating failures present the risk of long term biological damage. The cost is so great that it would divert capital away from the real tasks of creating jobs, developing reliable sources of energy and building the self-reliant economy. Nuclear power raises false hopes of a solution to all economic problems — not simply that of energy — and acts as a deterrent to the radical reconstruction programme that is needed.

No major reductions in energy use — until the shortage hits us. Forge ahead with nuclear power, whatever the cost, however high the taxation it requires, and at a totally unacceptable level of biological risk. Fail to give priority to clean energy sources and lose the chance of developing them *before* the emergency is upon us. Allow action to be bogged down in spurious debate on the accident rate that could be expected from windmills!

Stop nuclear power now. Think straight about the energy we shall have, and tailor our needs to this. Use energy more efficiently — given sound planning, industry would run on about half the fuel it uses now. Develop the alternatives — solar, wind and waves. Develop the decentralised energy — efficient economy. Don't let our jobs and way of life depend on energy supplies which we know won't last.

Problem

Usual policies

ECO policies

7. POLLUTION

Pollution means more than dirty rivers and smog. It means brain damage for lead-poisoned children. It means the poisoning of fish spawning grounds – and the gradual decline of the seas as an essential source of protein. It means climatic changes. It means toxins and carcinogens in drinking water. It means the destruction of natural beauty and the extinction of one animal or plant species per day. It puts man himself at risk.

More compromise. Keep pollution down, so long as it doesn't hurt industry. Go for more polluting economic growth, to pay for the cost of cleaning up. Balance the cost of brain damage against the cost of keeping lead out of petrol – and decide the cost of changing would be too great. Go for the quiet life; leave the big pollution problems to the next generation.

Stop pollution at source. Go for a different kind of industry and economy, one that does not pollute the mind with boredom, nor the environment with toxins. Take pollution as a measure that economic growth is on the wrong track. Protect resources and re-use them; don't convert them into the next generation's headache.

8. FARMING

Bad farming is good business. It means saving on wages, and spending on machines. It means saving on proper care of the soil, and spending on chemicals. It means spending on imports of raw materials and proteins which soon we won't be able to afford any more. It means destroying the fertility of agricultural soils, preserved and handed down to us by previous generations. It means food shortages in Britain when energy runs short, and when we can't rely on imports to prop up our farms.

Bigger farms; put out of business the farmers who do most to protect the fertility of our land. Break up local communities by dealing out unemployment in agriculture. Leave farms hopelessly unprepared for the day when they will need to provide far more of our food than they do now. Spend the soil capital of centuries on agribusiness that can't last.

Make good farming good business. Grow the food the country needs. Create more jobs on the land; reintroduce mixed farming; reduce dependence on chemicals, fertilisers and non-renewable energy; produce without destroying the soil. Put farming on its feet again. Remember: farming should be a priceless asset for us, not just another lame duck to add to our problems in the future.

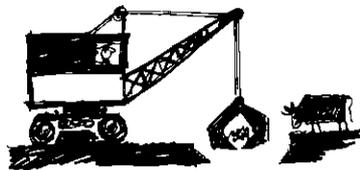
Problem

9. FOOD

Britain competes for foodstuffs with countries in which famine is all too frequent. World demand for food is growing faster than the expansion of agriculture, which in many areas has reached its limits. Britain's own buying power for foodstuffs is declining; imports of food will become more expensive. Britain will increasingly be thrown on her own resources to grow as much of her own food as she can.

Usual policies

Present agricultural practices are making Britain less self-sufficient in food, not more.



ECO policies

Work towards making Britain more self-sufficient in food by raising farming yields. Reform the economics of farming; encourage agricultural practices that do not depend on imports. Encourage an adaptation of diet, so that we demand less of the luxury, animal-protein, high-fat foods. Plan ahead to protect and make the fullest use of Britain's land. Stop the encroachment of towns and roads into farmland.

10. TRANSPORT

We depend on cheap transport for almost all the decencies and comforts which we need and expect: for the distribution of food; for getting to work; and for many of the jobs themselves. Cheap transport depends on cheap oil . . .

Is there a transport policy? Nothing but a hope-for-the-best attitude: hope that the oil crisis won't come too suddenly; hope that nuclear power will give us electric or hydrogen-driven cars. But there's no hope that the transport of 10 to 20 years ahead will be cheap. This means much lower standards of living all round, with the poor hit the worst, as usual.

If we can't keep down the cost of transport, let's reduce the need for it. Plan a society where people live closer to the jobs and communities on which they depend. Decentralise industry and reverse the trend to greater specialisation, by encouraging production for local markets. Enrich and green the urban environment so that people feel less pressure to get away from it. And give priority to the forms of transport that make the gallon of fuel go furthest — like railways and canals.

Problem

Usual policies

ECO policies

11. SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The certainty of recession and economic change brings with it the risk of social breakdown. Already local communities, families and marriage itself have been weakened, and the individual is more and more isolated. Any deterioration in law and order will be met, in Britain and elsewhere, with tougher penalties and stiffer government; the trend could be in the direction of disorder, breakdown, and the steady erosion of freedom.

Legislate, analyse and punish. But there's no recognition of how much social breakdown has already occurred – and that it needs only further unemployment for the consequences to be felt.

Show that local communities can mean something, by putting them in the front line for the task of building the society of the future. Show that each individual is an essential part of the community, by using his skills – and not simply compensating him for the boredom of an impersonal job. Show that the local community and the family are central to the individual's life. Fight for the right of communities to care for themselves, to look after their people, to get their confidence back again.

12. EDUCATION

Many schools are rescued by the dedication of their teachers. In others, in place of security, there is raw competition; in place of contact with the local community, there is separation; for co-operation, vandalism; for learning, defeatism.

False economies of scale. Village schools are still being closed. Children are being taught skills and given expectations which are becoming quickly obsolete. The massive size of schools and their high turnover of teachers scarcely allows children the security and reference points that they need and deserve.

Recognise the absolute priority of education in the transition to the stable society. Bring back smaller schools, related to the local community. Teach the realities of the environment and man's need to work with nature. Prepare children of all talents for the need to work within the community, and not to escape from it at the first sign of academic success. Develop imaginative retraining and adult education programmes to equip people with the skills that will be needed in the future, and to maintain the highest standards in the arts.



13. WOMEN IN SOCIETY

Society's expectations of women are hopelessly ambiguous and confused. The life of housewife and mother is all too often one of tedium and loneliness; child rearing has lost the status and understanding it deserves. Yet women at work have become part of an exploitative, consumerist society, its male-dominated values forcing women to measure their worth in terms of their wage, devaluing the very qualities that need emphasis.

Place the state in the role of the parent. Assume that the opportunity that matters is the opportunity to compete for positions in an impersonal and decadent commercial hierarchy. Make the life of the women who do stay at home even lonelier and further devalued. Hide from feminine qualities as an embarrassment in an age of white-hot competition.

It's time to recognise the importance of feminine qualities and skills. There should be full equal opportunity for all in the challenge of working towards a community-based society; in place of today's empty stereotyping, we should recognise the need for the widest possible diversity of capacities and talents. The production-orientated industrial society finds a debased and partial interpretation of men's and women's potential useful to it; the sustainable society will be based on what people are, and not on what economics would like them to be.

14. RACIAL MINORITIES

As jobs become scarcer, people will look for scapegoats, and it will be all too easy to find them among rival ethnic groups. Likewise, it will become easier for unprincipled political leaders to exploit racial conflict for political ends. The progress which has been achieved so far in ensuring the peaceful coexistence of different cultures in Britain could be at risk in the future.

Try to force wide cultural diversity into a single, emotionally-empty commercial culture. Base the success of racial policies on an economic system which is all too evidently in decline.

Reduce competition for jobs by developing labour intensive industries, using appropriate technology. Recognise cultural diversity to be an asset in contrast to the uniformity of a deteriorating economic system. Help to establish communities with their own sound economic and social basis, in which common ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds may be helpful and valuable. Maintain controls on immigration, to assist the minority groups already here to consolidate their position.

Problem

Usual policies

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15. HEALTH

The facts speak for themselves. One person in every five will become a victim of cancer. In the last fifty years, there has been a four-fold increase in sudden death from ischaemic heart disease. 20 per cent are or will become clinically overweight. Attempted suicide is becoming the main cause of emergency admissions of young people to hospital. Thousands of children have sufficient lead in their bodies to cause mental retardation. We eat 116 lbs of sugar per year each – and 95 per cent of children aged 14 have dental caries.

Build larger hospitals, subject to industrial action and bureaucratic waste, impersonal, and desperately vulnerable in the event of economic depression. Use more drugs and medicines, more expensive and sophisticated diagnosis. Give tacit approval to the view that there's no need to think about health until you're ill. Tend the athlete with scientific precision, but leave the diet and fitness of ordinary people to the advertising industry.

Create a society in which good health is a probability, not a bonus. Shift the emphasis of health care to the prevention of disease, by improving diet, reducing pollution, taking the boredom out of jobs. Protect the smaller hospitals. Build up a medical system which will give good service to the community under conditions of economic recession. Resist the withdrawal of medicine into high technology; bring it back into society.

16. FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Do we know what we want to achieve by our foreign policy? To preserve peace or to oppose oppression? To protect raw material supplies or to encourage developing nations to use their own resources? To co-operate with trading partners or to compete? To earn foreign exchange by selling arms or to preserve world peace? The muddle of conflicting foreign policy aims has led the western nations to throw away the chance to make a constructive moral contribution to world affairs.

More compromise. Stay deeply committed in world affairs as a trading nation. Keep a low profile. But defend supplies of energy and resources to the hilt.

Build a self-reliant economy and use this opportunity to take a less compromised, more moral stance in world affairs. Co-operate with other countries in demonstrating that it is possible for a developed nation to undertake the transition to the stable society. Demonstrate to other nations that solutions for the future lie in sound policies at home, not in expansion and influence abroad.

Problem

Usual policies

ECO policies

17. DEFENCE

More and more countries are becoming armed with nuclear weapons. The motivations to use these weapons grow — as potential enemies acquire them, as competition for resources and markets stiffens, and as social unrest increases. Russia, China and NATO, each a potential enemy of the other, are armed with nuclear weapons to the point of fantasy and holocaust. The threat of nuclear war does not diminish with time; avoiding it is a task which will never be finished, unless it fails.

Hold Strategic Arms Limitations Talks — but export the facility for nuclear and conventional war to overseas buyers. Try to reduce the possibility of nuclear war, but maintain conventional NATO forces on such a small scale that the West would have no effective defence apart from the threat of nuclear reprisal.

Question whether there is any outcome so bad that it would be worth fighting a nuclear war to avoid it. Place multinational nuclear disarmament as the first priority in world affairs. Maintain the option of unilateral disarmament. Examine whether this could increase or reduce the possibility of a nuclear strike against NATO allies. Work towards the elimination of Britain's economic need to sell arms abroad. Establish the framework for a citizens army realistically equipped and trained for defence.

18. POPULATION

World-wide, population is doubling every 33 years. This spells hardship and a deteriorating quality of life for millions. It spells starvation in the countries which cannot grow enough food of their own and cannot compete in world food markets. It means bitter competition between nations and classes, for space, resources and security. In Britain, our population has stabilised at 55 million: too high for comfort; and too high for a self-reliant economy without detailed preparation over a long period.

Pretend that stabilisation of the population in Britain means we've done enough. Assume that population is the Third World's problem, even though their people consume only a fraction of the protein and other resources consumed by people in the developed nations.

Recognise that population forms the framework for all social and economic conditions, and that it cannot be ignored on the grounds that it is too difficult. Recognise that a trend of declining population in Britain would bring clear benefits and a better quality of life to future generations. Come to terms with the need for long term population reduction within an overall objective — of adapting society to the real conditions of the future.

Problem

Usual policies

ECO policies

19. DEVOLUTION

The debate on devolution is a clear example of the dilemma confronting a society that only partially recognises the need for change. The heart seems to be on the side of devolution; the head plays safe for centralisation and authority. It is yet to be fully recognised that devolution is no romantic nostalgia for a heroic past, but an imperative if the transition to a stable economy is to be effected successfully. Devolution still has to earn its credibility.

See how little we can get away with, and fail to point out the immense value of the devolution movement to the process of reconstruction for the post-industrial state. Fail, likewise, to recognise that devolution isn't only a matter of regions — it concerns the whole imperative of building up responsibility and decision-making at community level, and of creating an economy and way of life which people can call their own.

Decisions should be taken and policies made at the lowest appropriate level. Develop self-managing local communities within regions; carry through the greatest unfinished task of our democracy: to give power back to the people.

20. POLITICS

We've inherited a political system from a previous age: when there was unlimited optimism for the permanence and growth of the industrial state: when the main problem was that of how to share out the benefits of industrialisation, and how to adapt from a small agrarian society to a mass urban one. When the balance between state participation and individual action was being tested. When the Left-Right dialogue still had something to say.

Look to the past for solutions. Keep alive the hollow Left-Right antagonisms, and tolerate "negative democracy" — in which more and more people vote mainly to keep the other lot out. Yet allow this antagonism to conceal the fact that the policies themselves are very similar — to reach for economic growth, even though it isn't going to offer the solutions any more; to pretend that the international ecology movement is at best an anti-litter campaign, and at worst an old-style revolutionary plot in new-style green clothing.

Look ahead for inspiration. Build up a new political tradition, rich enough to provide the material for debate by future generations. Create a political vocabulary for conditions as they are now — and allow it to be expressed through proportional representation. Show that the new awareness of ecology broadens the political frame of reference, that it brings together nature and industry, the spiritual and material needs of people. Bring the aspirations of man down to earth. Prove that politics can, after all, be an instrument of survival.

What you can do to help

1. Join the Ecology Party.
2. Join your local group – or join together to start one up.
3. Help to raise funds for campaigning.
4. Debate the ideas in this leaflet with your friends.
5. Help your local candidate at elections.
6. Help in the administration and management of the Party.
7. Take part in the Party's discussions on policy.



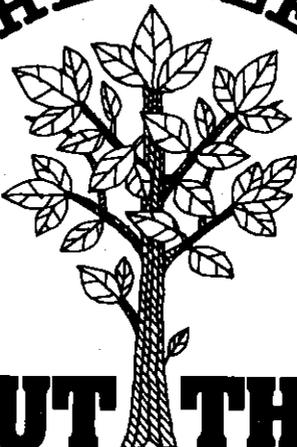
The industrial economy has brought an age of material benefits, advances in security and health, and standards of freedom and tolerance that have never been achieved before.

However, this Age of Affluence is now drawing to a close. The economic conditions on which people in the developed countries depend for their standards of living will soon cease to apply.

Fortunately, it is possible to create a way of life in which human needs are adequately met in the Post-Affluent Age. But if we are to avoid hardship, we should start to make the change straight away.

This change gives us the chance to create a society in which the full potential of man is no longer a tiresome impediment to commercial efficiency, but becomes a central resource and benefit.

SUPPORT THE GREEN APPEAL



**PUT THE
LIFE
BACK INTO
POLITICS**
ecology party

Please support the Ecology Party's National Appeal.

Ecology Party, P.O. Box 30, Norwich.

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