



Green Party
South-West Area
Newsletter

February

1989

A lotta bottle in Bideford

How do you sue a Water Authority - without getting a soaking yourself? Very easily, according to **Peter Christie**, Devon's Prospective Euro-candidate for the Green Party.

He's suing South West Water in the Small Claims Court for the cost of the bottled water and filters he has to use, he claims, because of the aluminium added to the water supply. So won't this cost him a fortune?

"It depends how far you take it", Peter told the Green Party SW Area AGM near Okehampton on January 21st. "I've spent just £ 10 so far - and £ 5 of that was a donation from someone who liked what I'm doing!"

Peter explained that in the Small Claims Court you don't have to pay the legal costs of the other party, but that they could claim the expenses of bringing forward expert witnesses. At a pre-trial meeting you all sit round and state how you intend to fight the case, and what the cost of those expert witnesses could be. "It's at this stage that you can tell them that you simply can't afford to go any further, and back down".

So was there any point in starting? "The case got national publicity - ", said Peter. "Write-ups in The Guardian and The Telegraph, coverage on local television - it's a great way to publicise an unnecessary and deliberate form of pollution, and a major health risk".

But why is aluminium added to water in the first place? "Just to make the water sparkle!" Let's hope Peter Christie's sparkling campaign idea will help to change that.

STOP PRESS! Saturday March 18th, at 10.30 a.m. South West EDUCATION CONFERENCE
proposed venue: Bridgwater Friends Meeting House. for further details phone
Gilly Lee, Spaxton (027867) 276

AGM Report

Together again

In a village hall right on the edge of Dartmoor, with a tor above us, and a view across the Tamar valley right across to Bodmin Moor, representatives of local parties from across the South West met on January 21st to plan the next year and beyond.

Right from the start it was clear that a new wave of optimism is sweeping through local parties. Several reported recent membership surges. Green Party Prospective Candidates will soon be in place in all six Euro-constituencies, with at least two, Devon and Somerset/Dorset West, expected to be among the top ten nationally in percentage terms. And we could have our largest total ever of county council candidates.

Together with this optimism seems to be coming a growing feeling that our organisation needs to be tighter, and internal communication better. And it was how to do this without sacrificing flexibility, local party autonomy and democracy that took up most of the morning. But as a result, we could now have a "born-again" Area, committed to reducing the membership turnover and strengthening the links between Local Parties and their campaigns.

Oops, what a giveaway...

First the good news - inspired by Nigel Lawson (no relation) we've had a giveaway Area Budget, and there's loadsa money going to local parties! A quick calculation showed that due to our frugality, sound economic management and (O.E. I'll come clean) hiccups in organisation over the years, there is a good deal of cash in Area funds. This cash will now be divided up between local parties on the basis of £2 per national member in their patch. Now the bad news - you're going to have to work for it.

1) Would **individual members** please look at the sticky label on the front of the envelope this came in - oh come on, you can't have recycled it already - and see if there is a **postcode**. If there isn't, please let national office know immediately (meaning **now**) - send them the label with postcode added. This is vital as the Party computer is only sorting you by postcode at the moment.

2) Would **local party membership secretaries** please decide exactly what area the local party covers and inform your County Co-ordinator (address on contacts page), or Area Co-ordinator if there isn't one.

Please would County Co-ordinators then check that each part of a county is covered by a local party, and that there are no overlaps, and then report boundaries to Sue Birley, Area Membership Secretary. Once all the local parties in a county have reported back, and assuming no disputed territory (you will all be nice about this, won't you), each local party will then get the money from the Area Treasurer.

This means that each member is automatically assigned to a local party everywhere in the South-West! If you are not getting a local party/county newsletter (and would like to!), please complain to your County Coordinator (or Area Co-ordinator if there isn't one).

Improving our democracy

Much time was given over to talking about improving the way the Green Party works. To summarise:

1) It was felt that a Local Party Constitution was essential, and that local members should know about it, what it says, and how to change it if there is a need. The only problem that has actually occurred so far - not in this area - was when a party member put themselves up as a candidate without the sanction of the local members. If something like this does happen, and you haven't got a constitution, you are up the

proverbial without a paddle. But show a local constitution to an Electoral Returning Officer, and you should be able to solve problems of this kind

2) There was some doubt over the need for an Area Constitution, on top of the motions already passed at successive AGMs. The future of the SW Area was seen much more as a loose federation of counties, with the counties eventually taking over much of the work at present done at Area level. Until then it was felt that we should organise this vast Area as best we can.

3) We also talked about the possibility of Representative, as opposed to Open National Conferences. A Straw Poll showed the meeting split about 50/50 on this. The main argument for moving to a Representative Conference was that with membership growth, an ever decreasing proportion of members would be able to get to conference and thus participate in Green Party decision-making. The main argument against was that it would increase bureaucracy, lead to inflexible block-voting, and so distance the membership from Green Party decisions.

So what's your view on all three of these points? Do we need to change at all? How much of a tie is a constitution, locally and nationally? How should the Green Party make its decisions? Please write in. And don't forget - the way we run the Party could be a future model for the way we run a government.

New Area Membership secretary/treasurer.

Sue Birley is taking over this time-consuming (and somewhat thankless) task from Steve Shaw, who has been doing it for two and a half years. Many thanks to Steve for all his work during this time.

European elections

Talking about elections took up most of the rest of the meeting. One important general point came up:

- Please **communicate with Chris Rose** about anything that is happening in your constituency, and feed him basic information about your campaign. Please send copies of Euro-campaign related press releases to Caroline Lucas as well!

Plymouth and Cornwall

At last, a nomination for this constituency, **Geoff Kitchener** from Penzance. He's a local councillor and chairman of the Planning Committee there. Selection procedure is in progress.

Devon

Peter Christie is so confident about saving his deposit that he's intending to put it up himself if the constituency raise a minimum of £1500 to cover leafletting costs. As well as the SW Water case (see first page), he mentioned that there were five separate articles on him regarding other local issues in the local paper this week! He also mentioned that two things got very positive feedback last time - our policies on Third World Debt, and on Animal Rights - and he would recommend some mention of these in the leaflet.

Wiltshire

Bill Hughes told us that they'd already raised the deposit and are now concentrating on public meetings. The main issues are Common Agricultural Policy, Proportional Representation, and local overdevelopment.

Dorset East/Hants West

Krystyna Bradbury will be the first Green Euro-candidate in the area, and the local party are treating it as a learning experience. Krys' professional fundraising

experience is already paying off - a simple tick-the-box (£ 5, £ 10, £ 20 etc.) begging letter was very productive, and they have raised £ 1200 since November! Members have also been asked to "loan" £ 100 towards the deposit, returnable if it's saved.

Bristol & Bath

Derek Wall has been launched on to the front pages of the local media. The constituency are campaigning on Agriculture and Democracy, but being careful about the way Green Party policy on Europe is presented. Once elected, we will "Renegotiate the Treaty of Rome" - not "pull out of the EEC" - a clear distinction! It was pointed out that as the only truly international party with a common platform we are the largest party in Europe!

Somerset/Dorset West

Richard Lawson should do very well here with a high local profile, a good base in his own constituency, and the Hinkley Inquiry bumping up the anti-nuclear vote and Green Media coverage. On national party calculations, this is the number one target constituency, with 6.5% as a reasonable prediction, but they will have to work pretty hard to do better than either Peter Christie in Devon, or Felicity Norman in Hereford, who topped the league tables in 1985.

County elections

The same point applies about communicating with Chris Rose - please send back the feedback form you got in Activists Mailing.

Local activity reported so far:

Bath - 7 candidates, a full slate

Plymouth - 5 candidates

Cornwall - have announced that they're fielding 12 candidates in local press, but haven't quite found them all yet - please contact local parties urgently if you might consider standing.

Exeter - 9 candidates, a full slate.

Swindon - 8 candidates, the highest number ever.

East Dorset - 3 candidates.

West Dorset - 1 candidate.

Bristol area - Bristol North - 7 candidates.

Bristol South - 12 candidates, a full slate.

More candidates in North Avon and Woodspring - numbers to be announced

Okehampton - are looking for a good candidate in a winnable ward.

Fallout

Scattered news items from the area

Cornwall

Not one, but **two** new local parties set up here in the last few weeks. In Redruth, the **Mid-West Cornwall** Green Party had its inaugural meeting on 16th Jan.

Fifty-three people at an inaugural meeting must be something of a record, and it looks as though a good nucleus will form. Next meeting 13th Feb., 7.30 at Redruth Community Centre. Contact Beth Mottart, 0209 842889 for details.

East Cornwall Green Party is also re-launching - contact on back page.

Dorset

Lots of publicity recently for the Green Party's Structure Plan submission, especially for a call for the military to pull out of Purbeck and a National Park to be formed there. Other fairly major points include a non-nuclear Wierfrith and a non-military Admiralty Research Establishment on Portland! In a county heavily dependent on

the military and nuclear industries it is felt vital to be offering positive employment alternatives

A date for people in the area is **March 3rd**, when **Satish Kumar** (editor of *Resurgence* amongst other things) will be talking about Green Values. 8.30pm at the Friends Meeting House, Wharncliffe Road, Boscombe
Right on the fringe of the area, but within the Dorset East/Hants West Euro-constituency, a **New Forest Green Party**, based in Romsey, is forming. Details from East Dorset.

Somerset

Alan Jeffery of Sedgmoor GP gave evidence at the Hinkley Inquiry in November, standing up well to cross-examination by the CEB's barrister. Not all speakers are deemed worthy of this dubious privilege, and it shows how seriously the CEB are taking the Green Party's case here. Alan put forward a strong case for our own unique political position - energy production on a small scale. No doubt the other parties will come round to this in the end, as they always do.....

No news yet on when other speakers will be called. Paul Staes, Belgian Green MEP will hopefully be called before the Euro-elections (preferably at the end of May!), and we are hoping for national media coverage - any ideas on this welcome.

Letter *A curse on 'national sovereignty'*

I was pleased, if a bit surprised, to hear the PM apparently joining the civilised world community when she recognised that we should seek justice, not revenge, in our response to international violence.

Unfortunately, she did not go on to explain how international justice might be enforced: the world has international vigilantes, but no international police force. The US government pretends to take on a policing role, but always outs its interests, and those of capitalism, before the common good of mankind.

"There can be no World Law without institutions to make and enforce it", stated Albert Einstein, who, with Mahatma Gandhi and many others, was pointing out in the 1930s and 40s the need for a World Federal Authority. The UN was subsequently born, but without sufficient power to make or enforce international law; until the UN becomes a vehicle for the expression of the democratic voice of the world population, either directly or through elected representatives, it will not have the power to make international law; until a directly recruited UN peacekeeping force replaces the national armies of its member communities, it will not have the power to enforce international law, including the right to inspect factories in Libya or elsewhere.

This, of course is where Thatcher changes her mind - whilst India and the USSR, amongst others, are calling for disarmament, de-militarisation and a Global Security System based on the UN, she wants more weapons and the right to do what she likes with them, in the accursed name of "national sovereignty".

Clem Atlee in 1957 stated "We just cannot afford any longer to indulge in the exercise of unfettered national sovereignty..... if we do not accept submission to a world authority we shall not get peace". Until I hear Thatcher accept this reality and take advantage of the unique opportunity that exists now that we have Gorbachev and not Stalin to negotiate with, I shall not believe her.

Yours faithfully, D.H.French, 114 Roman Road, Corfe Mullen, Dorset.

Next Area Meeting : A Media workshop on Sunday 12th

March. 10am - 4pm. Barbican Theatre, Castle St., Plymouth.

Practice doing TV interviews with a professional film crew and reporter! Please come and make your mistakes here and not on the nine o'clock news in front of umpteen million viewers. And it should be fun! This is especially important for candidates and press officers, but anyone is welcome
Please phone Malcolm Baldwin (0822 833692) or David Oddie (0822 833139) if you want to come.

Area contacts

Area representative on Party Council : Duncan McCantlis, Flat 1, 15 Station Road, Lower Weston, Bath. Tel. 0225 28650

Area co-ordinator and newsletter editor : Jamie McMillan, 9 Little Britain, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1NN. Tel 0305 67994

Area membership secretary and treasurer : Sue Birley, Marsh Cottage, Lower Wanborough, Wilts. SN4 0AR Tel 0793 790438

County co-ordinators

We urgently need county co-ordinators for **Somerset** and **Devon**. All it involves is channelling information to and from local parties, and saves the Area Co-ordinator and Membership Secretary a bit of work! Please contact the Area Co-ordinator direct if you would like to help.

Avon

Co-ordinator : Geoff Collard, 2 Cotham Vale
Bristol BS6 6HR Tel.0272 738072

Woodspring : Bob Wilson, 7 Heathfield Road,
Nailsea, BS19 1EB Tel. 0272 852740

Bristol : Martin Turnbull, 4 Cleeve Road,
Knowle, BS4 2JP Tel 0272 720302

Bath : Gavin Withers, 35 New King St.
Bath, BA1 2BN. Tel 0225 315335

Wansdyke : Mike Boulton, Waterside House,
Haydon, Radstock

Dorset

Co-ordinator : Beth McCaffrey, 1 Derwent
Road, Weymouth Tel 0305 783676

West Dorset : Rob Cumming, 7 Monmouth
Road, Dorchester. Tel 0305 64092

East Dorset : Valerie Woodward, 19 St.
Catherines, Wimborne. Tel 0202 841420

North Dorset : Garry Smith, 12 Kings Rd
Blandford, Dorset. Tel 0258 53217

Cornwall

Co-ordination shared between :

West Cornwall : Howard Hoptrough, 11
Belgravia St., Penzance. Tel Pen 63008

East Cornwall : David Oddie, Scomber,
Harewood Road, Calstock, PL18 9QW
Tel 0822 833139

Mid-west Cornwall : Beth Mottart
Tel 0209 842889

Somerset

Co-ordinator : vacant

Sedgemoor : Alison Goldie, Mulberry,
North Newton, Bridgwater TA7 0BL
Tel 0278 663834

Taunton : Clare Bainbridge. Tel T.412531

Devon

Co-ordinator : vacant

Contact (for local boundaries) :

Tim Brennan, 47 Bartholomew St. West, Exeter.
Tel 0392 210143

Exeter : Steve Potter, 11 Mansfield Road,
Mount Pleasant, Exeter Tel 0392 79666.

North Devon : Peter Christie, 30 Lime Grove,
Bideford.

North Dartmoor : Elizabeth Aylmer,
Widgery House, 20 Market St, Hatherleigh,
Devon Ex20 3JP Tel 0837 810624 (long ring)

South Hams : Chris Titmuss, 7 Denys Road,
Totnes Tel 865436

Plymouth : Peter Boone, 12 College Ave.,
Mutley. Tel 0752 269540

Torbay : Glenda Locock, 87 Chestnut Ave.,
Brixham. Tel 0803 33599

East Devon : Pat Stoolman, 8 St Michaels Hill,
Clyst Honiton, Exeter. Tel 0392 66783

Wiltshire

Co-ordinator : Sue Birley

Swindon : Bill Hughes, 18 Goddard Ave,
Swindon. Tel 22989

Salisbury : Tony Miller, 14 Churchfields
Road, Salisbury SP2 7NH Tel 22637

Devizes : Erica Harris, 6 Eastleigh Road,
Devizes. Tel 78145

Please let the editor know of any errors / omissions !