

THE ECOLOGY PARTY IS

..... a small political party which now has a modest amount of campaigning experience, as the election leaflet collage on the front cover indicates. During our campaigns we have found that a number of questions are asked particularly frequently. We outline the answers to these questions below in the hope that they are also the questions you would most like to ask.

WHAT IS ECOLOGY ?

Ecology is ^{mainly} a science defined as "the study of the relationship between animals and plants, and their environment". Scientific ecologists (as opposed to political ones) have a reputation for poking around in ponds and ditches; "schoolboy ecology" and most people are surprised to find ecological textbooks full of mathematical formulae. The findings of ecology are as important, and unhappily sometimes as difficult to understand, as those of physics and chemistry. But the conclusions of ecology for mankind are simple enough - if we are to survive we must do so as one of many species living in balance and harmony with our environment. If we go on destroying our environment and wasting resources we will ultimately destroy ourselves.

IS THE PARTY POLITICALLY RIGHT OR LEFT ?

Neither. The party membership is drawn from all the three main parties. What members have in common is a commitment to the need for ecological principles to be recognised by government, ~~and~~ for Democracy to be maintained, and preferably improved. Agreement to compromise on other issues is a necessary part of this approach. In a nutshell, it's more important now to ensure that there are adequate resources left for our children, than to argue who should own how much while we go on wasting them.

HAVE ANY OF THE PARTY'S CANDIDATES BEEN ELECTED ?

Yes. There is an Ecology District Councillor in Sussex, a Parish Councillor in Worcester, and a County Councillor in Cornwall.

HOW OLD IS THE PARTY ?

It was founded in 1973, but despite 8 very active campaigns in the elections of 1974 progress in building up a national organisation has been slow, due simply to the immense problems involved. We hope for more rapid progress in the coming years now that we are getting to grips with these problems.

HOW IS THE PARTY ORGANISED NATIONALLY ?

"With difficulty" would be a short and honest answer to this. Currently the party is organising itself into

12 regions covering Great Britain which will be responsible for their own affairs and collection of membership subs from members within each region. The National Executive Committee (N.E.C.) will be composed of a delegate from each region plus up to 12 members who are councillors or M.P.s, and three members elected by national ballot. The members on the N.E.C. now were elected by the 1977 Annual Conference, but the composition already conforms largely to the outline above.

WHERE DOES THE N.E.C. MEET ?

At a convenient member's house. For the coming year this is likely to be in London. Meetings are held about every 3 months. Any member can attend as an observer.*

WHO FINANCES AND CONTROLS THE PARTY ?

The members. Membership subs and donations from member's pockets are the main source of income. Some funds also come from the sale of manifestos, recycled toilet paper and whatever else we can think of.

The "Highest Authority" is the party's Annual Conference. But the N.E.C. has in effect as much power as it needs to do its job. The Party chairman is elected annually by the N.E.C. and is currently Jonathan Tyler, now beginning his second year as chairman (re-elected October 1977).

WHAT ARE THE PARTY'S RELATIONS WITH OTHER PARTIES, THE TRADE UNIONS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS ?

Generally good. Most main-line political organisations have ecological groups or movements within them, so that we always have a ready point of contact.

WHY DOESN'T THE ECOLOGY PARTY WORK THROUGH THESE OTHER ORGANISATIONS ?

We believe progress in Ecology can only come from a political alliance based on Ecology. Ecologists in the Labour and Tory Parties will always be in a dilemma - "Do we fight each other over Left-Right issues, or work together for Ecology". In practice they end up doing the former. We also believe that the Party's ability to put Ecological issues squarely before the electorate is very important; discussion of Britain's future should not be restricted to party committee rooms.

ARE THERE PARALLEL PARTIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES ?

Yes. Notable examples are the Centre party in Sweden (currently part of the coalition in power) which is developing an increasingly ecological approach, the French party "Ecologie et Survie" and the New Zealand Values Party.

WHY HAVEN'T I HEARD OF IT IN THE PRESS ?

Because it's small and relatively new, and doesn't get involved in violence, which the papers are always keen to report. All the national papers have covered us at one time or another, in particular the Guardian, but generally only at times

of major activity, such as elections.

DOES THE PARTY HAVE FULL-TIME PAID WORKERS ?

No. And consequently there is no H.Q. building. All the party's officers and workers do what they do in their spare time.

WHERE ARE MOST OF THE MEMBERS ?

Spread fairly evenly over Great Britain. "Members from Cornwall to Caithness" is a party cliché. Concentrations of members exist generally in areas where one or two members have begun organising branches.

DOES THE ECOLOGY PARTY REALLY HAVE A CHANCE OF SUCCESS ?

Yes. As is indicated by the fact that Ecology candidates have already been successfully elected, the turnout to vote for us is even now comparable with what the Liberals could expect in similar circumstances. And this despite the fact that we have entered most of our campaigns so far as a previously unheard-of party.

WHAT ARE THE PARTY'S POLICIES ?

The problem of producing a manifesto democratically has dogged the party almost since its formation. To bring even half the membership together in one place for a week to discuss such a document would cost thousands of pounds in transport and accommodation. The party's manifesto from Sept. 1975 to Sept. 1977 was a lengthy document produced by a tiny committee, and it is not difficult to see where certain of its members rode their own particular hobby horses through its pages. The majority of it, never the less, was sound; but with a marked increase in active members the 1977 conference felt it was time to stand down the original manifesto and attempt to produce another more democratically.

Because of this, the party's manifesto is in a state of limbo until consensus is reached on a remodeled version. Meanwhile at least two of the regions will be producing regional manifestos which will complement the national one. What follows is necessarily one man's view of what is likely to emerge in the remodeled manifesto. Just how likely is indicated in each relevant section of the text.

THE ECONOMY

The commitment to end economic growth (before natural constraints end it for us) is a basic plank of the policies of all ecological parties. A growing economy uses resources and creates pollution at a faster rate each year, and the present commitment to growth, which all other parties share, is the prime cause of the problems which now loom ahead of us. A planned end to growth will stop man's impact on his planet becoming greater as time passes, will allow sensible planning for the future, and, of course, will also mean that we will not go on getting richer in the way we do now.

The last point is not seen as a bad thing; there is no evidence that 'growth' actually makes people happier, and the statistics for divorce, crime, vandalism, tranquilliser use and other things are an indication that people are becoming less satisfied with their lives rather than more so. Secondly, the amount of resources we use currently is more than sufficient to guarantee everyone a reasonable life-style: we do not need more wealth to stop old age pensioners dying of cold - we need to use what we have more wisely.

ENERGY

Our current pattern of energy use cannot be maintained for much longer: most of our energy comes from oil and natural gas which will virtually all have been used within about two decades. Fast Breeder nuclear reactors are not acceptable due to the inevitability of accidents, the problems of storing waste for thousands of years, and the possibility of nuclear proliferation on a large scale. Fast reactors are in any case not necessary outside the context of a growing economy.

The Ecology Party seeks to divert funds into alternative energy sources: tidal, wind, wave and solar power. Much of the technology has already reached a useful stage of development, we have the technical expertise, and the funds are available as soon as other wasteful projects are shut down (for example, the new Mini production line, nuclear research facilities, the Drax B power station).

Alongside the development of safe and renewable energy sources will go a range of policies designed to save energy: grants to households and industry to install insulation, improvements in bus services, and tax changes, to coax commuters out of their cars and onto buses, redevelopment of rail and canal systems to take heavy freight, implementation of power station district heating schemes, changes in the price structures of gas and electricity to encourage conservation, and so on.

RESOURCES

Fiscal measures could also be used here to encourage the production of goods made to last instead of goods made to wear out. People should come to assess their wealth in terms of the "built to last" goods they already own or can acquire gradually, rather than the number of new shoddy goods they can buy each year. Local authorities should operate waste recycling rather than waste disposal schemes.

EMPLOYMENT

Most of our policies will require much more, rather than less, labour. Whereas a growth economy uses energy and resources to replace labour, creating redundancies, Ecology policies aim at the reverse - saving energy and resources by using men. This does not mean a return to hard labour; for example, carrying goods at 5 m.p.h. by canal barge rather than at 50 m.p.h. by heavy lorry will need more employment. The tax measures mentioned above will, by making resources relatively more expensive, encourage firms to

employ more people rather than use more resources.

INFLATION

Inflation is a result of demand outstripping supply: hence Chancellor Healey's perennial problem of "increasing demand without fueling inflation". He can only do this if the supply of resources matches demand. A zero-growth economy will not suffer from this problem: our concern will be to reduce demand or keep it stable, but not to increase it. 'Farewell to Growth' will eventually mean 'Farewell to Inflation'.

GOVERNMENT

There is a strong commitment to devolution in the Party, both as a means of promoting more efficient government, and self-sufficiency within Regions, and also as a means towards more democratic government. Many governmental powers must be moved back towards the "grass roots", and local councils should have far greater financial autonomy from Westminster.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

Britain only produces half her food. Since we cannot always rely on being able to import the other half, we need to aim at a far greater degree of self-sufficiency. All further concrete development on farmland must be stopped, and the best organic farming methods used to achieve high output per acre rather than per man hour. Fiscal measures and cash incentives are the most likely means towards achieving this.

POPULATION

Britain no longer suffers from a rising population, so government action in this area is not urgent. However, our current population is too high for these small islands in the longer term and should be reduced as much as possible. Means to encourage such a reduction should include a full range of family planning services as part of the Health Service, and strict control on immigration, probably with immigration allowed only on unavoidable humane or compassionate grounds. ?

HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Should be organised much as they are now but should be under local government control. Comprehensive schools should be retained, but with radically improved staffing ratios. Since extra teachers can be taken on with virtually no additional cost in resources there are essentially no limits to the number that can be employed.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Several varying social welfare schemes have been put forward in

the party, but with no clear agreement so far to change from the present system. Our main aspiration is for full employment to take many people off welfare dependency.

TRANSPORT

Road and air transport use excessive amounts of fuel, cause pollution, and use up valuable agricultural land. Their use should be discouraged by appropriate taxes, and an end to government spending on their further development. Funds will be directed towards railways, buses and waterways, both to develop them and keep fares at an acceptable level. Better facilities will be provided for cycling.

POLLUTION

Pollution will be dealt with on the principle that "the polluter pays". Cash grants to help with the installation of pollution reducing equipment are likely to be necessary alongside penal taxes on pollution.

FOREIGN POLICY

In changing to a more self-sufficient society we will cooperate with like-minded nations, and will work independently and through existing international organisations to influence more countries in the same direction.

Aid to developing nations will be in the form of help and ^{appropriate inter-mediate} technology which will lead them towards the type of self-sufficient and sustainable economy which we want for ourselves.

DEFENCE

The abolition of all nuclear weapons is seen by the Party as a prime objective, but opinions vary on how this should best be achieved. Factors likely to be taken into account in deciding defence policy in the coming decades are:

- 1) A major (or the major) source of conflict now is the competition between growthist nations for ever greater quantities of ever decreasing resources. A move by Britain towards zero-growth and self-sufficiency will be a move away from this situation. As more countries try to live within their means the likelihood of war should decrease.
- 2) The passing away of the world's oil will enormously reduce man's capacity to make war, and is likely to shift the balance of power in favour of any nation which is fighting defensively rather than on the attack.
- 3) In the immediate future a major resources crisis could make war more likely than at any time for 30 years.

It appears from the above that we might wish to retain our existing armaments in the short term, but with realistic hopes of nuclear and perhaps other disarmament in the not-too-distant-future. However, no clear consensus has yet been reached in the party because attention has been concentrated on our economic and social policies.

CONCLUSION

It will be apparent from this brief summary of Ecology policies that they add up to a major restructuring of our economy and style of life. To carry these policies to a conclusion in, say, 200 years would be relatively easy; equally, it would be impossible to implement them in a single decade. To make these changes with the minimum disruption, and to have a better chance of making them before a resource crisis takes from us the chance to make choices about our future, it is essential to begin as soon as possible. We do not regard the possibility that it may already be too late as a reason for apathy, but as a reason for working for change with greater energy.

WANT TO KNOW MORE ?

Two very informative but never the less readable books are:

'The Limits to Growth'. by Meadows et al. Pan books edition published 1974 is the easiest to get hold of. (£1.25)

'The Energy Question'. by G Foley. Pelican books published 1976

HAVE YOU A FURTHER QUESTION ABOUT THE PARTY ?

Write to the Membership secretary (address below) or ring

Steve Lambert, London 848-4846

Jonathan Tyler, Birmingham 472-1088

Keith Rushworth, Leeds 672198.

WANT TO JOIN ?

Full membership costs £4.00 per year, or £2.00 if you are an old age pensioner or in full-time education. Joint (e.g. husband & wife) membership costs £6.00. All members may vote at conference and receive the Party newsletter with the newspaper 'Good Earth' (subject to possible change in the publication arrangements of Good Earth). Send subscription to:

John Davenport, 2 The Old Vicarage, 26 Main Road,
Kempsey, Worcester.

Cheques crossed and made payable to the Ecology Party, please.

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