

SOUTH - WEST ECONeWS

no. 7 April/may '84

Newsletter of the SW area
of the ECOLOGY PARTY.

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Devon goes for EUROPE

(See also Euro-Elec
focus on page 5)

The Ecology Party in the South-West has one candidate for the European Elections in June - Peter Christie will be standing in the Devon constituency. Peter, a College Lecturer and Bideford Town Councillor, was selected as the prospective Euro-candidate for Devon at the recent SW Area Conference. In order to mount an effective campaign we need your help and donations. Peter writes:

Why are we standing in the Euro-Elections - bearing in mind the Party's policy is to withdraw from the EEC? There are three reasons:

a) We are a political party and not standing could lose us credibility.

b) We owe it to those many voters in Devon who are now 'committed Ecology voters' (some in 5 elections now at various levels) to offer them a candidate.

c) Above all, we will be spreading the Ecology message and attracting new members - it is clear that with every election we secure new recruits.

This is a chance to get Ecology policies to at least 250000 voters, but it will require 100000 leaflets and the total cost will be £1500 or more. There are about 650 members in the SW - if everyone sends £2 (or more) we can mount a really good campaign. We are therefore appealing for donations. Some 400 of you will have received a stamped addressed envelope with this newsletter which we hope you will make use of. If you have not got one, please do not let that stop you sending us something. The address for donations is: Roger Giles, 14 Winters Lane, Ottery St. Mary, Devon.

SW AGM report

The SW area AGM/Conference at Exeter University on February 25th was well attended. Those who arrived late missed the first good news of the day - Herbert Bell impressed us all with his efficiency as membership secretary and reported a continuing rising membership trend. Reports from other area officers followed, with Bernard Little giving his final report before (sadly) moving to North Leics.

A discussion on Euro-elections followed most of which is reported elsewhere in this newsletter. Then there was lunch. These days it is worth going to the conference just for the food provided by Exeter Eco.

The highlight of the afternoon session was the appearance of Jean Lambert, co-chair of Party Council. Jean led a very interesting discussion on the Campaign for Real Democracy - of importance to us all especially now with the threat of the £1000 deposit. Jean's talk covered wide ground however - local democracy, the abolition of
(continued on back page)

PARTY COUNCIL REP'S REPORT

The Party Council meeting on the weekend of April 7/8 was a really interesting one (for once!). Here are the main points:

Conferences After an enjoyable Southport 1, there is the feeling that there is a need to give some time at Southport 2 to ECOLOGY. Some prestigious names are to be approached in the hope that one evening will be devoted to a speaker who will be both inspirational and a crowd-puller - of non-Eco crowds who will pay for the privilege.

Putting our house in order Green ideas may be spreading but we are still paying our two full-time staff members a beggarly £60 a week; and we do have only two people to do all the work that has to be done if we are to be a credible political party. Paul Ekins has offered to organise a 100 club - 100 people covenanted to pay £100 a year. This would provide an assured income of £10,000 out of which we could raise Paul Thatcher's and Tony Jones' pay to a magnificent £80 a week and employ a third person, whose job would be supporting local parties.

Paul Ekins and most other Council members also feel strongly that our present renewal rate of just 50% can only be accounted for by the fact that many local parties are far from efficient so that new members get little for their money and no reminders go out when subscriptions are due. It was therefore strongly urged that now the Party has a computer, subscriptions should be sent directly to Party Office. This would free efficient activists from the chore of memberships and ensure that no one was left at the mercy of inefficient local membership secretaries. A change of this sort would have to be approved by conference.

Youth Group We now have a youth campaigner (and he lives in the SW - just!). He is Andrew Hill, 34 Potters' Way, Salisbury, Wilts SP1 1EX. Once this is properly launched its members will receive an interesting and stimulating membership pack including fact sheets for backing up discussions on controversial green topics. Meanwhile Andrew would like to hear from potential Youth Group members, especially if there are a nuclei of at least five people interested in setting up a local Young Ecology group.

Elections About 5% of the local council seats up for re-election in May will be contested by the Ecology Party - which is disappointingly low. However there are now 14 Euro-candidates and some exciting ideas about approaches to elections in constituencies not fielding candidates. Branch contacts in such areas will receive a mailing soon.

Unfortunately I had to leave before what promised to be a very interesting discussion on Peace (and the problems of CND).

ANNA PAWLYN

AROUND THE LOCAL PARTIES

Once again, most of the branch news comes from the big city branches. I would be very pleased to hear more from branches in the rural areas. Is there still Eco life in North Wilts or West Wilts or Cornwall?

BRISTOL

The last few months have been a time of great activity for Bristol branch. In the first half of March, a Green Fair was held with 18 stalls including groups as diverse as the World Development Movement and the City Farm. The Green Fair was followed by a ceilidh in the evening. Both events were successful, especially from a financial view with over £200 being raised.

Before and after the Fair, an Avon County by-election took place. A considerable amount of effort went into the campaign. Two leaflet drops were made and at least 50% of households were canvassed. The result was a slightly disappointing 4.1% with the Tories beating the Liberals by 29 votes.

Now for Bristol it is forward to the May City elections when they have a very impressive slate of candidates.

PLYMOUTH

Like Bristol, Plymouth has contested a local council by-election recently also with a disappointing result - just 2.3% despite a big campaign effort. A marginal win for the SDP saw our vote squeezed to the bone.

On a more optimistic note, the Plymouth branch are about to begin formulating a Green Plan for the City which will form the basis of the 1987 City Council election manifesto. It is hoped to involve other Green/Environmental groups in the drawing up of the Green Plan.

A small action outside the SWEB offices in Acid Rain week brought some good publicity.

NORTH DEVON

North Devon is one rural branch which is still very active. They are currently involved in a number of diverse campaigns. News that Torridge District Planning Committee had approved the felling of over 11000 trees brought strong protests from the Bideford branch. As a result of this development, Bideford are intensifying their scrutiny of felling applications and news of yet another large felling application has arrived.

Meanwhile the public inquiry into Stage Two A of the North Devon Link road grinds on and on..... Roger Joanes has given the Ecology Party's evidence. The Public Inquiry into the bit which, if approved, will destroy Roger's home is not expected for some time yet. One important gain out of the proceedings so far was the Inspector's admission that the entire basis of the Link Road could be questioned at the Inquiry.

Back at The Old Railway Station, Filleigh (Roger's threatened house) a French TV crew arrived recently to film the story of the square-foot plots. A local French-speaking member spoke to her fellow countrypersons from her petit plot of land. Apparently, the French TV crew saw the whole scenario as some weird example of English eccentricity and later dubbed a soundtrack of English folk music onto the film. Still the whole story did go out to millions of our French friends, some of whom must have latched on to our vibes!

Among the other notable N. Devon activities of late have been a letter to Prince Charles (continued on page 4).

MORE NEWS FROM LOCAL PARTIES

NORTH DEVON
(continued from page 3)

about nuclear waste (really) and comments on lead levels in Barnstaple.

More recently two public meetings have been held - one on Civil Liberties and one on Rubbish. Individual members have been working away trying to get recycling schemes off the ground.

The Medical Campaign against Nuclear Weapons' double-decker bus has been touring N.Devon towns, organised by Eco member Dr. Noel Harley; and it was very gratifying that it was very largely Eco members handing out leaflets and inviting passers-by into the exhibition.

Finally, regular open discussion meetings have been re-launched in South Molton.

These will be held on the third Thursday of each month to discuss a wide range of topics.

EXETER

Exeter continues to be one of the most active branches in the South West. They are fielding five candidates (out of 12 wards

up for election) in May's City Council elections. At least two leaflets will go to each home in the five wards.

These exciting election developments are being well supported by excellent press and even TV coverage. Recent well publicised campaigns have included a proposed cycle path by the river, and opposition to an application for quarrying sand at a site near Broadclyst. In the latter case, an Exeter Eco contingent attended a packed public meeting in late February and submitted a detailed objection to the County

Council. This pointed out that the sand extraction contradicts the Council's agreed mineral policy over the long term.

NEWS OF NEW BRANCHES

It is encouraging to be able to report news of more recently formed (or re-formed) branches in the SW. Down in Dor set, the Weymouth and Portland Ecology Party was re-formed on 1st December 1983 by a small band of enthusiasts, who felt that there was enough support in the area. The branch will encompass all of West Dorset. Commendably, the new Weymouth branch has put up a candidate in Weymouth West ward for the Borough Council Elections. Contact Geoff Hunwicks, 12 Overbury Close, Lanehouse, Weymouth for more info.

At the other end of the area, there is now an Ecology Party branch in Redruth, Cornwall which makes three active branches in Cornwall (Is that a record?). The contact in Redruth is Lori Murdoch, 119 Albany Road, Redruth.

In Devon, the foundations of a new Eco branch were laid at a meeting in Créditon in February. An encouraging number of people listened to guest speaker, Dave Bradbury, give a talk on the virtues of Eco. Dave (who is the Devon co-ordinator) also reports the possibility of new branches in Tiverton and in Exmouth, in the near future. Watch this space for more details.

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Most of the above reports of local party activities were gleaned from branch newsletters. Thanks to everyone who sent me newsletters - but I would appreciate hearing from all the rest of you branches out there.

Steve Shaw



EURO-ELECTION FOCUS

As reported on the front page, Peter Christie has been selected as prospective Euro-candidate for Devon. By the time you read this Peter's candidature should have been officially launched at a press conference in Exeter and the first batch of election leaflets may well have been printed.

Roger Joanes (address back page) has been appointed as election agent.

On the fundraising front the early signs are encouraging. A generous donation of £100 has been received from Somerset Eco. A jumble sale by Braunton Eco raised about £65, South Hams have promised £150 and Bideford £100 for the campaign. But there is still a long way to the target of £1500 so make use of the enclosed stamped envelopes.

As well as money help is also needed with addressing the election leaflets - 100000 leaflets are a lot of leaflets! Four local election agents have been appointed to coordinate the leaflet addressing. They are:

- EXETER AND E.DEVON Roger Giles
- W.DEVON Steve Shaw (addresses back page)
- S.DEVON AND TORBAY Josie Stanyon, Start Mill, Diptford, Devon Tel 9782 371
- N.DEVON Bridg t Ardill, 12 Bickington Lodge, Dickington, Barnstaple Tel 0271 77761

If you can help with addressing leaflets please get in touch with your local agent as above. If you live outside Devon but can help contact either Steve Shaw (Cornwall) or Roger Giles (rest of SW). Support would be particularly welcome from members without a local branch.

Polling day is Thursday June 14th.

ALTERNATIVE CAMPAIGNS

Areas with no Ecology candidate may well run 'alternative campaigns' aimed at drawing attention to the unfairness of our electoral system etc. but no details have been received at the time of going to press.

PETER CHRISTIE, euro-candidate, THIS IS YOUR LIFE

Peter has two degrees, in Economics and Geography so he has got a better chance of understanding the CAP than most, and having travelled about a bit (in the Merchant Navy) he should be able to find his way to Strasbourg, when elected.

He is now a lecturer at N.Devon Technical College but in the past he has had a variety of jobs including a short spell in an abattoir - he's been a vegetarian ever since. Peter has stood 3 times as an Ecology candidate in local elections. Last year he was elected to Bideford Town Council, coming 3rd in a five member ward. He just missed getting on the District Council and is confident of being elected next time.

Since becoming a Town Councillor, Peter has been a prime mover in having Bideford made nuclear-free and it was his motion which was instrumental in getting the Secretary of State to reverse a decision which would have condemned Bideford to continuing sewage pollution of the estuary.

In his 'spare time', he has used a job creation scheme involving 23 people to index two local papers; he is trying to launch a recycling scheme that will create permanent jobs and to get archeological digs started along the line of a new (unnecessary) road. Peter was one of the chief objectors at the Bideford high-level bridge inquiry. He writes a regular column on local history in his local paper and is the Exeter extra-mural tutor in local history for North Devon. He also recycles junk on his Saturday market stall.

Peter is married to a well-known singer and has lived in Devon for eight years. He has two small daughters, the youngest of whom distinguished herself by chewing everything in sight in the Returning Officer's Office during the formal nomination of the Ecology Parliamentary candidate last year!

ANNA PAWLYN

LOCAL ELECTIONS MAY '84

Please send full details of your local election results to the SW ECONews editor so that the information can be published in the next edition.

SW AGM/Conference Report (continued)

the GLC, the Police Bill, the denial of trade union rights at GCHQ and so on. One interesting point: the Government has breached two of the European Human Rights Covenants in less than two weeks - the price of democracy being £1000 in each case. (No prizes for naming the two breaches). On the subject of Electoral Reform, it is a great insult to the electorate of this country that we will be one of only two nations not to elect our European MP's on a PR basis -- presumably because we are not thought capable of understanding such a system! Earlier in the afternoon, County co-ordinators for Somerset and for Avon were elected to replace Bernard Little (see below) but no co-ordinators for Wilts or Dorset could be found.

Conference finished with a number of workshops. The most popular and most controversial was on the Party's image, led by an Ecosympathetic market research person, who wants to help us get our message across in a positive and attractive way. He is going to look at the Devon Euro-campaign and will be at the election post-mortem at the next conference on June 16th.

STEVE SHAW

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* NEXT SOUTH-WEST AREA CONFERENCE *

* SATURDAY JUNE 16th *

* FROM 10.30 a.m. *

* EXETER UNIVERSITY - CORNWALL *

* HOUSE *

* Agenda will include: *

* Euro-elections post-mortem *

* Local elections post-mortem *

* Discussion on Party 'image' *

* and much more. *

* Superb food by Exeter Eco. *

* Other agenda items to either Steve *

* Shaw or Bob Wilson, by June 1st. *

* SEE YOU THERE *

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The next issue of SW ECONews will co-incide with the area conference on June 16th. All copy to the editor by June 2nd. Please note that the next issue will not be mailed to members but must be collected at the conference. Otherwise please send a stamped addressed label to the editor to receive a copy.

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Wilts Tel (022 16) 4387

AREA ELECTION AGENT ROGER GILES, 14 Winters Lane, Ottery St. Mary, Devon Tel(040481)3387

EURO-ELECTION AGENT ROGER JOANES, (AS for Anna Pawlyn above).

COUNTY CO-ORDINATORS

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