

SOUTH - WEST ECONIEWS

no. 9 August '84

Newsletter of the SW area
of the ECOLOGY PARTY.

Distributed free to all Ecology Party members in the south-west

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Forward to next May: TAKE YOUR SEATS

AREA CONFERENCE
report

The latest South-West Area Conference in Exeter on June 16th was an interesting and worthwhile day, although the number attending was less than usual. The conference theme was elections - looking back to recent experiences in local and Euro-elections and forward to the County Council elections of May 1985 and beyond.

The local elections this May in places like Exeter and Bristol were discussed in depth. Bristol had a full slate of 23 candidates but the results were on the whole disappointing. Many people at the conference felt it was better at present to select a few promising wards to contest and put all efforts into a good campaign there. Nevertheless it was agreed that Bristol's effort was 'a masterpiece of election planning', and they seem keen to contest all the Avon seats in next May's County elections.

The 'Take your Seats' idea, where we symbolically claim the number of Council seats due to us on a proportional basis, had a lot of support and is likely to be taken up in Devon and Avon. It is anticipated that there will be about 30 Eco candidates in Devon (out of a maximum 90), and that a common Devon County Manifesto will be produced. On one point everyone was agreed: electioneering is a year-round activity - not just a three week one. Next May's election campaign starts NOW. We need to combine professionalism with long-term planning and seizing opportunities.

The Euro-election count had not taken place at the time of the conference so a proper discussion of this campaign was not possible. However Bristol described their successful 'Alternative nomination campaign' and mock ballot (see page 2).

After the usual fine lunch, Gundula Dorey arrived to describe the 'Other Economic Summit' which had happened in London a week earlier. Already next years TOES is being planned.

NEXT SW AREA CONFERENCE *****

THE NEXT AREA CONFERENCE WILL BE ON
SATURDAY OCTOBER 20th AT 10.30a.m. AT
EXETER UNIVERSITY.

The agenda will include a discussion on 'Women and the Ecology Party' (postponed from last conference) and workshops on interviewing, the media, etc. Agenda items to Steve Shaw or Anna Pawlyn.

COPY-DATE for next SW ECONIEWS is Sept. 30th for publication on October 20th at Area Conference (copies to be collected).

1984 ELECTIONS: FINAL ROUND-UP

PETER CHRISTIE GETS NEARLY 7000 VOTES IN DEVON EURO-ELECTION

Those Eco people who went to Totnes for the counting of the votes in the Devon Euro-elections on Sunday 17th June had good reason to feel pleased with themselves. First, Peter Christie obtained the creditable vote of 6919 (or 3.4%) of the poll. Later we heard the good news that our sister Greens in Germany, Belgium and Holland had gained a total of 11 seats. In fact Die Grunen achieved the spectacularly successful vote of 8% and will have 7 Euro MPs.

There is no doubt that Peter's vote was a good one. For the first time since those heady days of 1979 I came out of an election count having seen more Eco votes than I expected. Of course, we were lucky to have an excellent candidate - Peter gave better than he got in the public debates. But I do think that we have seen a change in voter attitudes. The conventional parties have been trying to win the Green Vote in this election as never before. They have been picking up messages that ordinary people are at last beginning to concern themselves with Green Issues.

This election can I believe be a watershed for the Ecology Party. We must use the European results as a launching pad for better things. To do so we must work hard and to use two of the themes which emerged from the recent area conference: professionalism and seizing opportunities.

ROGER GILES

A MESSAGE FROM PETER CHRISTIE

I would like to thank all those dedicated folders and addressers and deliverers who put in so much effort - it really heartened me to go round Devon and so many people working together - there must have been over 100 of you.. My biggest thanks go to my agent Roger 'memo a minute' Joanes and the press agent Roger 'hold the front page' Giles - the latter Roger's work was so successful that at least 2 editors of local newspapers got vitriolic calls from the Tories complaining about the large amount of coverage we were getting!

Thank you all again and see you in 1989 I hope!

PETER CHRISTIE

BRISTOL -- THE ALTERNATIVE

In Bristol we decided not to contest the Euro-election a long time ago. In the end though we pulled off quite a big media splash by carrying out an alternative idea circulated nationally. This involved obtaining 600 signatures on a mock nomination/petition calling for the scrapping of election deposits (£600 in this case) and replacement by far more nomination signatures.

We did not quite make it - 586 names - in the ten days between the end of the local elections and close of Euro nominations. Nevertheless there followed press coverage (some large pieces) and radio interviews.

On Euro-polling day we had a mock ballot using proportional representation (STV) outside some polling stations. Our results gave the Alliance a narrow win over Labour on first preferences with Eco gaining 18%. As a result we gained valuable data on the origin of our second preferences and were able to predict a Labour Euro win in Bristol under PR.

Both local radio stations and HTV reported our ballot and we got a front page picture in a local paper.

Relatively speaking, an unprecedented success on the publicity front. This is the kind of visibility we need all year.

CHRIS ROSE

PARTY COUNCIL REP'S REPORT: A GREEN VIEW OF THE MINERS' STRIKE

What do Greens think of the Strike then? As so many Party Council members have been asked this we spent some time at the last Party Council (July 7-8) talking about it.

It was generally felt that neither side could be endorsed and that both sides were so busy fighting the class war along traditional lines that as usual they were losing the long term perspective. People who don't ask the right questions seldom come up with the right answers.

The undemocratic way in which Scargill has manipulated the union should be condemned by anyone who cares about democracy, as should his failure to criticize violence. A lot of the policing has been frighteningly provocative, but it is manifestly absurd to say that there has been no unprovoked violence on the miners' side. The peace movement has shown that even extremely provocative policing need not lead to escalating violence.

However it is not just the violence on both sides that gives cause for concern: if anything even more worrying are the civil liberties questions raised by the police hassling of miners away from the picket lines and the creation of a nationally directed police force (still paid for by financially shaky local authorities).

As far as coal itself is concerned greens must want to see coal replaced as soon as possible by conservation and non-polluting renewable energy sources. But many of the Coal Board's uneconomic pits are only uneconomic in comparison with nuclear power when costed on a wholly mendacious basis and with imported coal, often highly subsidised at source. A pit closed may be a pit lost for ever so we must be careful not to put any coal beyond recall, especially as coal will be seen to be far more precious as North Sea oil and gas run out.

The conservation cause is best served by making sure that we get all the coal there is from existing pits in preference to opening new ones. This will be expensive but it is essential. If working out existing pits produces more coal than we need at present then at least coal mountains are cheaper to maintain than butter mountains and don't go rancid.

Keeping pits open is also necessary to buffer pit communities while alternative employment in the area is found. These communities prove well the green view that no community should rely on any monolithic employer.

Meanwhile we should point out that, in the attempt to bring miners to their knees nuclear power stations are not being closed for the routine servicing, even though this endangers the workers in them.

ECO AND CMD

The Ecology Party is the one party that wholly endorses all CMD's aims. But we have been consistently ignored by national CMD in its organising of rallies and demos. Jean Lambert's presence on the platform of the anti-Reagan demo was the result of a lot of pressure on CMD and she was unpleasantly ignored by the other speakers while they were waiting for the marchers. This all due to the Labour Party dominance of CMD so we, as an affiliated group, are putting two resolutions to the next CMD conference: 1) to introduce our own 3-year rule for office holders and 2) to demand that where a representative of a political party is invited to address a rally then a similar invitation should be extended to all parties which support all of CMD's aims.

In order to prove that Eco is strong in the peace movement we need to make sure that our banners are more prominent at the rallies. The next big rally is at Barrow-on-Furness on October 27th.

ANNA PAULYN

NEW COUNCIL REP NEEDED: Anna will be a full-time student in the Autumn and consequently will be standing down as Council rep at the next SW conference. So we need a new rep. If you fancy having a go Anna would be happy to discuss it with you and describe what the job entails. Since the last three reps have been from Devon it would be good to have someone from the east of the area - makes the travelling to London for meetings easier too.

AROUND THE LOCAL PARTIES IN THE SW

A good idea from EXETER ECO - Green Pages, an alternative directory of services. The listings in Green Pages will include businesses whose work/product is beneficial to the community as a whole e.g. organic suppliers, bicycle repairers, acupuncturists, music teachers, restoration and repair work, pressure groups and anyone whose product, service is ecologically sound. The cost of a listing in Exeter Green Pages will be 75p per insertion. Further details from: Ray Vail, 39 Guinness Lane, Exeter EX4 2LP Tel Ex. 215969.

In DORSET a public meeting is being organised at Sherborne with guest speaker Tony Jones (Eco publicity officer) for Thursday October 11th. In the same county the PLYMOUTH branch are still going strong. They contested one seat in the May local elections with the candidate Geoff Hunwicks obtaining a very respectable 99 votes (about 5%) - not bad for a first attempt. They are planning on standing in 3 or 4 wards in next May's County elections.

Charles Boycott of TRIGLBRIDGE (Devon) Eco is instigating a recycling scheme. The main difficulty, as always, is raising sufficient money to get started and despite appeals on local radio etc. about £2000 is still needed. If you think you may be able to help contact Charles at Ashwell House, Ashwell, Bishopstington Devon tel 06267 3005.

PLYMOUTH ECO have recently been instrumental in setting up a local Campaign against the Police Bill, following a successful public meeting on the subject in May.

News of the WILTS and SOMERSET GREEN GATHERING to be held at Stowford Manor Farm, Wingfield near Trowbridge from 24th to 26th of August. Frone Eco have prepared the ground and sown the seeds for this local, organically grown gathering of the greens. There is space for camping (50p per night), there will be a creche, workshops, stalls, participation, spontaneity, non-direct inaction in violet . . .

NOTICEBOARD SOUTH-WEST

PARTY COUNCIL REP Anna Pawlyn,
Old Railway Station,
Filleigh, Barnstaple,
Devon Tel (05986) 311

MEMBERSHIP SEC Herbert Bell,
14 Priory Park,
Bradford-on-Avon,
Wilts BA15 1QU
Tel (02216) 4387

ELECTION AGENT Roger Giles,
122 Cowick Lane,
Exeter, Devon.
Tel (0392) 37593

NEWSLETTER EDITOR Steve Shaw,
5 The Green,
Hooe, Plymouth
Tel (0752) 48581

COUNTY CO-ORDINATORS

DORSET Vacant

AVON Bob Wilson,
7 Heathfield Rd,
Nailsea, Avon.
Tel (0272) 852740

DEVON Tim Brennan,
38 Pennsylvania Rd
Exeter, Devon.

CORNWALL John Chadwick,
19 North Rd,
Torpoint, Cornwall
Tel (0752) 813456

SOMERSET Colin Hunt,
6 Alna Rd,
Taunton, Som.
Tel (0823) 52159

WILTS Liz Spittal,
17 The Down,
Trowbridge, Wilts
Tel (02214) 66325