



Elections 83-87

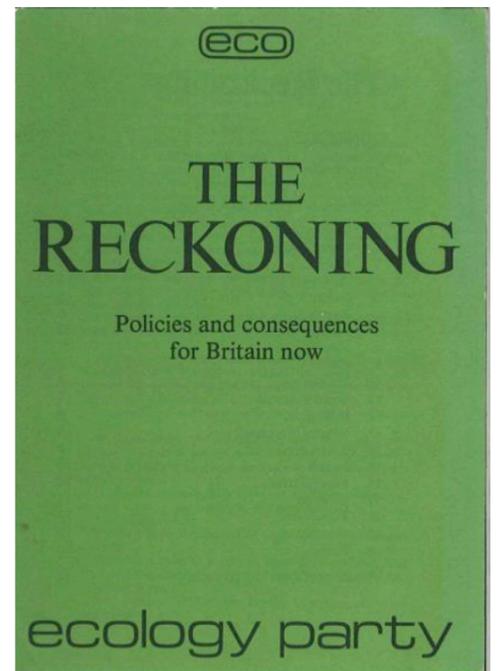
Generals, a Euro and Locals

With membership stable at around 4,500, an unpopular government fighting an imperial war and cracking down on unions, it should have been time for a new political voice.



The Party has never been short of policy, MfSS already ran to over 120 dense pages. In 1980 a new shorter Manifesto was produced called "The Reckoning".

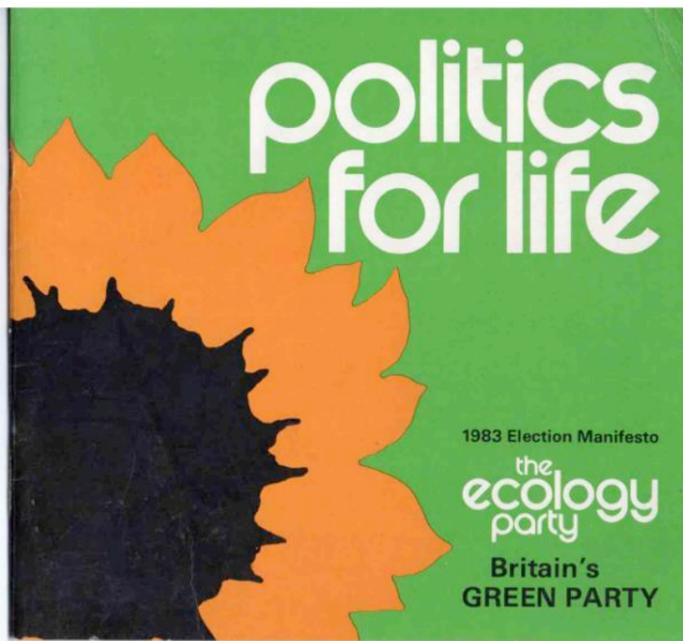
Against nuclear energy and weapons, sections on women and racial issues – a proposition to appeal to the wider radical eco/peace/feminist movement?



1983 General Election

The Conservatives under Margaret Thatcher had had three years of deep unpopularity, but victory in the Falklands War (April-June 1982) saw a turn-around in their approval. Labour was deeply divided having swung to the left with the right wing of the party splitting to form the SDP. This, and an 'improving' economy, enabled Ms. Thatcher to go to the polls expecting victory. The election was called for June, a year early.

The Ecology Party had consolidated their position since 1979 and managed to put up 109 candidates. A Party Election Broadcast was again produced. The manifesto was entitled "Politics for Life". A 40 page booklet outlining the principles behind green politics and detailed policy proposals. The conclusion was titled "Politics as if People Mattered"



The total votes cast for ECO was 54,899, an absolute increase over 1979 but with twice as many constituencies being contested the actual share of the vote fell to 1.04%.

In terms of votes the best result was RPC Mutter in Lewes with 1,221. Dr. Thomas in Ogmore and D.R. Newell in Reigate were the only others to get over 1000 votes.

Looking at vote shares Thomas got 2.94%,

Mutter 2.44% and Newell 2.03%. The only other candidate to poll over 2% share was Jonathon Porritt in Kensington

It was certainly a disappointment for many in Eco that no progress had been made since 1979.

1984 European Election

The Ecology Party put up 16 Euro candidates for the 81 UK seats including one each in Wales and Scotland.

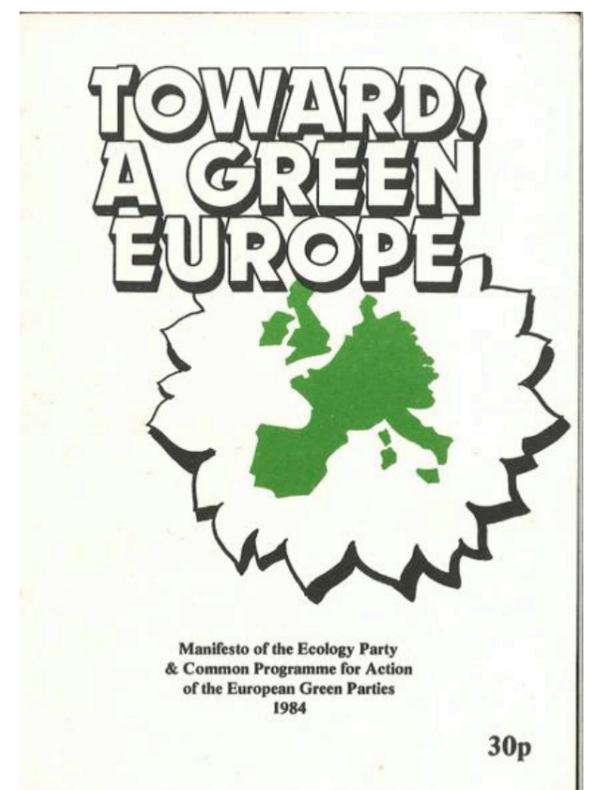
The party was still ambivalent on Europe, like many European Greens seeing it as a capitalist construct.

There was some attempted at a coordinated pan-European Green approach. The UK we still had no PR, whereas in much of Europe PR enabled some Greens to be elected to the Parliament.

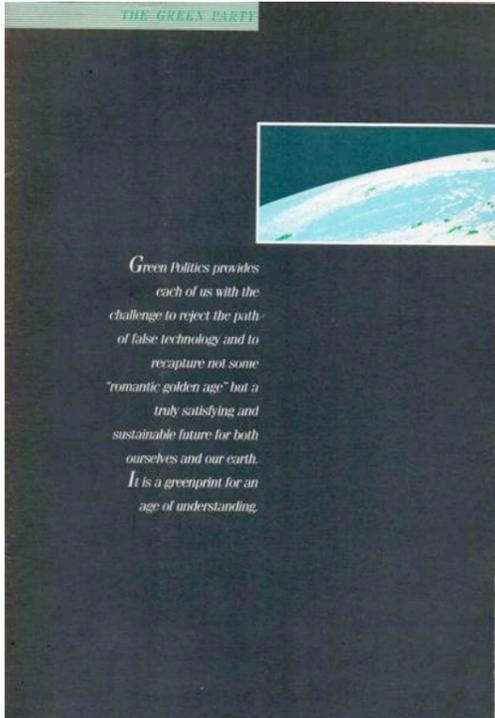
Jean Lambert stood for the first time in London NE and gained 3.7%. Best result was in Hereford & Worcester with 4.7% share and the average share across constituencies where Ecology Party candidates stood was 2.8%.

Nationally the 70,853 votes equated to a 0.5% share.

The 1985 Spring Conference in Dover was combined with a Euro Green Congress



1987 General Election



The Ecology Party, now renamed The Green Party, managed to stand in 133 seats gaining 89,793 votes. An increase on the previous election and the average vote share crept up to 1.34%

The [Manifesto](#) ran to 32 pages. It eschewed a catchy title, the Introduction stated:

" All of a sudden 'Green' means fashionable" ...

"Many politicians ... think they can 'capture the Green vote' ...

"Like all other forms of life, we depend for our survival and wellbeing upon a fragile network of physical, social and spiritual links with the rest of creation. Green politics is an acknowledgement of the complexity of that web of life. "

Richard Lawson in Weston-super-Mare gained both the largest number of votes (2,067) and share (3.58%).

Nowhere else gained over 3% or 2,000 votes. In terms of votes the next best was Horsham with 1,383 (2.21%).

Ten constituencies gained over 2% share - Woodspring 2.0%, Bristol West 2.02%, Leominster 2.03%, Chelsea 2.06%, Warwick & Leamington 2.19%, Horsham 2.21%, Surrey East 2.27%, Hackney North & Stoke Newington 2.57%, Islington North 2.89%.

The best results were all concentrated in the affluent South of England.

Although far from spectacular the party was managing to hold its position and beginning to grow its support. Subsequent local election results were encouraging with vote shares well over 10% becoming more common.

Membership was rising more rapidly – back over 5000 in '87 and over 7000 in 1988.

The scene was set...

1989 – Europe Again

In 1984 Germany, Belgium and Netherlands had elected Green MEPs. That, coupled with the rising interest in the UK in environmental and alternative politics, put the Green Party in a good position going into the election.

Chernobyl and CFC's (the hole in the ozone layer) had put environmental issues in the public mind. The Party's involvement in the anti-Poll Tax campaign, the growing unpopularity of Thatcher and Labour mired in internal battles and the collapse of the SDP-Liberal Alliance all favoured the Greens.

The decision to put up a candidate in all 81 seats and a strong PEB (known as 'Slime Child' and directed by David Bailey) and a good young turnout led to a surprising result.

At Green-History this is right at the end of our current period and as yet we have NO materials from the 1989 election campaign aside from the PEB – perhaps you can help?

Results

In terms of results the overall vote was 2,292,705 votes, a 14.9% share of the total vote roundly beating the Liberals into 4th place.

Best was Sussex West with 24.5%, fifteen other constituencies, mostly in the South-East, gave over 20% to the Greens. Only in most of Scotland and parts of the North East did the vote slip below 10%.

Consequences

The result astounded both the pundits and the party. Suddenly the Greens appeared to be the third party in British politics and knocking on the doors of power.

The consequences were tragic for the Greens.

On the one hand the established parties woke up to 'the environment', if not ecology, as an issue they had to be seen to address.

On the other hand, the Green Party proceeded to shoot itself in both feet by failing to engage the new members and focusing on internal constitutional issues instead of getting out on the streets.

A story that we look forward to telling – were you there? Tell us your version of what happened next...