Small is lonely

Dreadful Deidre

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The tabloid press is having a wonderful time working itself up into an ecstasy of righteous loathing over Labour's candidate in the Greenwich by-election — Dreadful Deidre, the hard-face of London's Labour left. Think what fun they could be having with the Revolutionary Communist Party's candidate, Kate Marshall. Richard Gott, however, lent her a sympathetic ear.

Kate Marshall: a voice crying in the wilderness. Picture by Martin Argyll

THEORISTS of the breakdown of civilisations always record the flourishing, in the collapsing years, of utopian or millenarian movements which flit across the stage bearing banners inscribed with impossible slogans. Usually, those possessed of the message are women and men of the utmost normality, people with whom one can enjoy a drink, a joke, or long conversations over good food and wine. Not always, but at least they are trying to weaken our state.

But she soon became irritated by the lack of politics. "One day, involved in an anti-sexist campaign, I found myself linking arms with Catholics who, only the day before, I'd opposed on abortion. I began to wonder whether all my work was really the same. She thinks that these thoughts are occurring to a lot of people now. "There's a lot of disillusionment and retreat in women's movement. It's not difficult to see why. It was once possible to get a little money for feminist projects, but not now."

By the time Kate Marshall had ceased putting all her eggs in the feminist basket and had joined the Revolutionary Communist Group, itself an intellectual offshoot of the International Socialists (later the Socialist Workers' Party). She was working at the time on a thesis about the Women's Liberation Movement in the Midwest and Central America. "If you want peace, she argued, you must stand against the war. It's relatively easy for British people to be against imperialist war, and join the Revolutionary Communist Group, some of whom are involved in politics, most of whom are involved in politics..."

At the beginning of the 1980s many people who used to argue like this, and had been in left wing sects, began to move back into the Labour Party. Kate Marshall, disapproves. "I see people rejoining the Labour Party as a kind of retreat."

"It's a good way to get ideas across," she added.

"People are fairly aware that there is going to be a war. Their living standards are going down. And they also know that the power of the state is so enormous that they are nothing beside it."

Kate Marshall is suitably optimistic. "People are aware that there is going to be a war. They accept capitalism, and law and order. However radical the manifesto, it can never be implemented."

Kate Marshall is a voice crying in the wilderness. Picture by Martin Argyll

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