

## Evening Echo

### Pollution tarnishes town's image

**S**UMMER'S a-coming and Southend's beaches will soon be crowded with holidaymakers and sunseekers.

Good news, indeed, if they are headed for Shoebury's popular East Beach. Not such good news, however, if their destination is the pebbly shore of Westcliff and its - at least outwardly - inviting waters.

Take too close a look at the bathing opportunities off Westcliff beach and you might encounter more than the normal forms of marine life.

According to the Reader's Digest Good Beach Guide Westcliff, plagued by sewage, is the most dangerous beach in Essex.

Users of Shoebury East Beach can relax. It was awarded a Marine Conservation Society pass which means its swimmers can swallow the odd mouthful of water without then having to rush off to their GP.

The water industry would argue that it is winning the battle against pollution and, in many areas, that may well be the case. It is also true that more beaches have this year passed the MSC's tests. That is not much consolation to Southend Council which is doing its level best to put the town back on the tourist map with a series of imaginative schemes. The water industry has a duty to get its act together all over the country, not just in selected areas, before it can start blowing its environmental trumpet.

### ON THIS DAY May 22

**1455:** The Lancastrians defeated the Yorkists in the War of the Roses

**1859:** Sherlock Holmes creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was born

**1885:** French novelist Victor Hugo died in Paris aged 83

**1897:** The Blackwall Tunnel, was opened

**1908:** Wilbur and Orville Wright patented their flying machine

**1972:** Nixon became the first US President to visit Russia

**1972:** An earthquake killed 1,000 people in Turkey

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# Sir Teddy - still the rebel with a true blue cause

By LINDA CHRISTIE

**T**HE day he was called into John Major's office is still imprinted on his brain.

Rebel MP Sir Teddy Taylor had broken the golden rule in politics - he had refused to obey a three-line whip.

Sir Teddy explained: "It had always been the party's secret weapon. If you lose the whip the constituency is ordered to choose someone else for the seat.

"But what people don't realise is we made history here in Southend. Central Office sent someone down, but the constituency party told them to take a running jump - that hadn't happened before."

The seaside town visit followed a call to the PM's office. The Southend East MP had refused to vote in favour of extra cash for the EEC and an increase in VAT on fuel.

"I said to John Major, there's no way I can do it. He said you have to support the party. I told him: 'John, I like you as a person but I can't do it'. He just shook his head and said it was very sad, but I would have to leave."

Another seven MPs followed Sir Teddy's lead, but the shrinking Government was forced to welcome them back after a three-month stand-off.

Disobeying the party was nothing new for Sir Teddy. He faced the ire of a furious Ted Heath 25 years ago after resigning from his Scottish minister post because the Government signed the Treaty of Rome.

"I was labelled a rising star but I decided to throw away my political career because the treaty made it clear we were heading for a single European state. Unfortunately no-one agreed with my views then."

Sir Teddy believes Europe is one of the main issues which contributed to the humiliation of the Tories this month - and it will decide who he votes for to lead the party.

"I have written to all the candidates asking their views. I would even support King Kong if he put forward a decent policy on Europe.

"All I want is a referendum. If people choose to go ahead with it then fine, but at least it was their choice."

If none of the candidates gives Sir Teddy the answer he seeks he will abstain from voting.

He is already fighting off pressure from leading party figures to become the new shadow Scottish secretary.

He explains: "I can't do it. I just wouldn't be able to devote enough time to Southend."

His love of the town prompted him to turn down the Iron Lady herself, Margaret Thatcher, back in the late 1970s.

"I was in the shadow cabinet as trade and industry secretary. I explained to her if the party got into power I wouldn't be able to do the job."



■ I've won - Sir Teddy celebrates his victory and a rare Tory success on May 1

Looking back at his canvassing for this election, Sir Teddy said: "Worryingly, for the first time I got the impression that all politicians are unpopular.

"There was a pretty strong desire to kick the Government in the guts, people felt they were arrogant and self assured."

Another factor could have been the Conservative posters.

"They were appalling - all this stuff about Blair's funny teeth and eyes.

"The party should have sat back and said things are going pretty well in Britain now, but remember what they were like under Labour. If I had been chairman I could have saved them about £10m.

"The election was fought using Clinton-style politics and PR techniques but I feel if you just tell people what the facts are, even if those facts are bad, they will respect you."

Another nail in the Tory's fast-growing coffin was sleaze.

But was it as bad as the media made out? "The answer I'm afraid is yes," admits Sir Teddy.

"We went from the party of standards to the party of scandal.

"We saw MPs take money and not declare it. Another was given a free trip by an industrialist then used the ticket to apply for tax relief!

"Anyone who broke the rules should have

been removed.

"I have to say John Major is a sympathetic, understanding, decent person, but what we needed was a clear lead."

Tony Blair's infant Labour Government already faces sleaze allegations. Glasgow's millionaire MP Mohammed Sarwar stands accused of paying a rival candidate to ease up his campaign.

Sir Teddy said: "When complaints of the sort made against Mr Sarwar and Neil Hamilton arise, the MP should be immediately suspended, then have to explain to the party why they should be taken back. Otherwise it drags on forever."

But the sex scandals that have rocked the party never really worried Sir Teddy. "They have been going on for years, it's just people find out about them now. Some MPs' personal lives are in complete disarray. I keep thinking where's the temptation? If you do your job properly you don't have time for sleaze."

He adds with a smile: "The standards of Parliament have gone down like a stone since I joined 33 years ago - purely a coincidence I hope."

"In those days my parents were so proud of me, but the other day my son George told me he had a discussion with his friends about what their fathers did. He was embarrassed to admit I was an MP."

## It could be the last hurrah

IT was one of the bloodiest and longest General Election campaigns ever, and it could be Sir Teddy's last.

He admits: "I might have a go again but I'm 60 now, you can't go on forever.

"I'm just glad my career didn't end in rejection."

Yet his chosen profession has led to health problems.

In 1970 he collapsed in the Commons and was taken to Westminster Hospital where he met wife Sheila, a medical social worker.

He revealed: "The doctors say I'm okay now but I'm so used to long hours I don't know how I would have coped if I had lost my seat - although I do believe things happen for the best."

As for his long marriage to

Sheila, chair of Southend Community Care Services, Sir Teddy believes the key is his determination to stay near his family.

"I have a flat in London but I probably only use it once a week.

"Sheila and I get on very well and are proud of our children" (John, 24, George, 22, and 18-year-old Louise).

The busy pair are now planning a rare trip away, rare because Sir Teddy is renowned for his hard work in the constituency.

He revealed: "Yesterday, for example, I had 120 letters.

"I wonder if it's arrogance but I love taking on impossible cases and sorting them out.

"Politics doesn't come into it at all."



■ Sir Teddy – enjoying a rare moment of relaxation away from his hectic schedule

## He's scum and so proud of it!

SIR Teddy Taylor is proud to be called scum. It won him the vote of one Shoebury fan and his son a nickname that will stick for life.

George, 22, spent a week helping his famous father canvassing.

Sir Teddy said: "I was lucky I didn't get any abuse whatsoever but George found a very nice lady in Newington Avenue.

"She told him I had helped her out with a problem and she was delighted to find I wasn't toffee-nosed at all – in fact I was scum like her.

"She asked George if he knew me and George admitted: 'yes, I'm son of scum'. The name has stuck."

The MP's popularity has never been in doubt. While other Tory stalwarts saw their safe seats tumble, Sir Teddy won with a respectable lead.

Now he's a man with a mission – to crack the 11,000 Rochford voters who were added to his constituency this year.

He said: "When they opened the boxes from those wards it

was quite horrifying. I thought I had lost.

"The news came over on the television that other seats had suffered a 19 per cent swing. I worked out with the Rochford results so bad I could even lose by 8,000 votes. It looked pretty bleak."

He added: "When I first stood for Southend East in 1980 I was very unpopular because I was a Scotsman.

"But the box that saved me, to my astonishment, was the Milton ward. That gave me a special feeling about that area.

"This time I was touched by the good results coming from the Shoebury ward.

He admitted: "When I went into the count that night I certainly wasn't confident. What people don't appreciate is Southend East doesn't look like a Conservative area.

"But it has been a dream to me. I love it here and they are my kind of people."

He was full of praise for his opponents, Labour's Nigel Smith and the Liberal Democrats' Paula Smith. "She was so nice I felt like voting

for her myself." He also found time to commiserate with fellow Tory, Dr Bob Spink, who saw his Castle Point seat fall to Labour.

"I know how great that sense of rejection feels. He had committed himself to Parliament and to the party 100 per cent.

"I think he was more a party politician than myself and we had never had a great relationship – in fact we had quite a few disagreements – but I knew he was very serious and conscientious."

As well as raising his profile in Rochford Sir Teddy already has a hitlist of problems he wants to solve during the next five years.

Top of the agenda is a ring road or bypass around Southend to make trips to London easier – but he admits it could be tough: "Southend people are upset by change."

The other is getting a better deal for the seaside town's old folk.

He explained: "They feel no one cares for them. I want to change that."

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