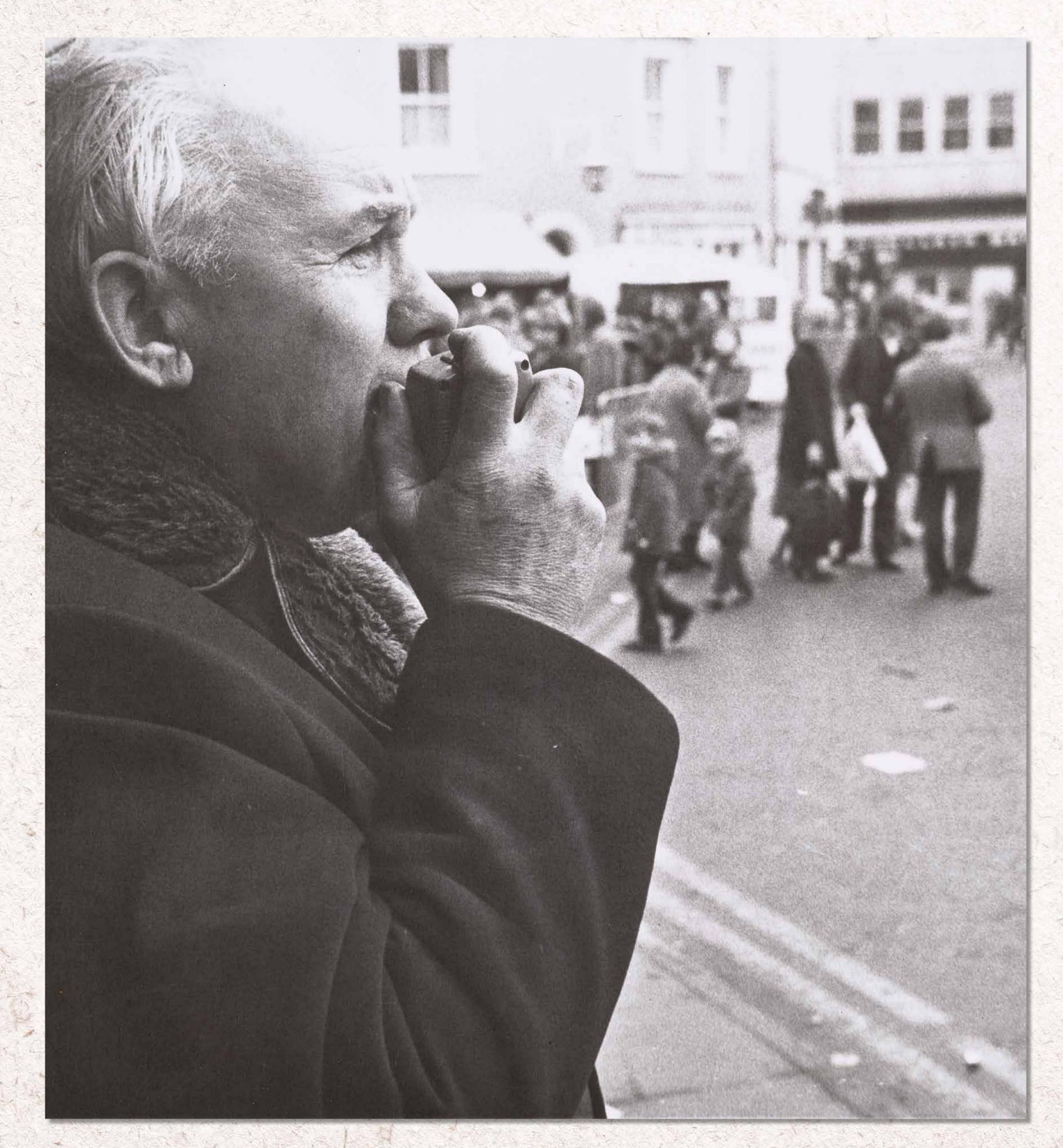
Theat Westacott, Communist candidate

In his autobiography, Shaking the Chains (Chesterfield, 2002), Fred Westacott (1916-2001) described election campaigning as "among the most satisfying and stimulating experiences as a political activist".



Left: Fred Westacott speaking at a rally outside Mansfield Town Hall, February 1974 Westacott Collection, FWC 3/1/2/6/2





Newspaper photograph of election candidates in Mansfield, from the Mansfield Chronicle and Advertiser, March 1966. Westacott Collection, FWC 4/15/19/1. The Conservative Party candidate was Ken Clarke, at the time a 26-year old barrister, but now well-known as MP for Rushcliffe and former member of Cabinet under three Prime Ministers

Scrapbooks, campaign leaflets, newspaper cuttings and

campaigns. In Mansfield, Westacott had the support of

Hackett. She produced the Election Bulletin and rallied

supporters, organising leaflet distribution, canvassing and

the Market Place in the morning and afternoon, and took

the redoubtable Communist Party election agent, Ida

public meetings. In February 1974 the Party "invaded

that he and his comrades brought to their election

draft speeches all demonstrate the energy and enthusiasm

Westacott was born in the South Wales mining town of Tredegar. He joined the Communist Party in 1936, and first stood for election for the Tredegar Urban District Council in April 1946. After moving to the Mansfield between 1966 and 1974. In 1971 he was made Secretary of the Communist Party's East Midlands District.

"For a few weeks one could ... concentrate with gay abandon entirely on public activity — on doorstep discussions, pit, factory-gate and street meetings, evening rallies, mass leaflet distributions and torch parades. I felt that this is what politics is all about"

It's hotting up.

comrades displayed posters, sold papers and gave out leaflets.

The response we are getting on the doorstep is friendly, with virtually no animosity despite the anti-Communist campaign. However, we need many

EVERYBODY OUT THIS WEEKEND!

BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP

(Shaking the Chains, 355) MANSFIELD ELECTION

> Left: Mansfield Election Bulletin, February 1974 Westacott Collection, FWC 4/15/17/2

> > draft speech by Fred Westacott, February 1974 Westacott Collection, FWC 4/15/17/1

fwc/4/15/17/1 Will you be wasting your vote to vote Communist? This is a question west is o ten asked? You are never wasting your vote if you vote for what you beieve in. This is the simple answere. Why vote fer a pedicy you may disagree with in the hope that everything will turn out alright? But there is another aspect. Never before with so much attention be concentred on the Communist vote. After the attack on Communists, militants and the left, kharaxwilk Heath and Wilson will be looking to see how many vote Communist. A good Communist vete will be a personal demonstrat on your part that you want to see a Labour Gev-ernment catry out a different policy from the past, that you want a genuinely working class polcy as a step towards Socialis, Many of you veted for Jee in the electing for a full time efficial in Notts. You have veted for Communists and lefts in your union elections. stronghold, as a wasted vote. I ask you to vote for me on February 28th, and se shew your complete opposition to the Tories and Tory policies, and as an indication that you want a Labour G vernment thatxwill which will

begin the pricess of taking B iatin along the road

to Socialism.

over the front of the Town Hall".

Loyalty to political parties was deeply-rooted and Westacott found it hard to convert people's personal liking for Communist Party candidates, and agreement with some of their policies, into votes. The 'first past the post' electoral system also encouraged some electors to see a vote for Westacott, in a Labour





East Midlands, he stood as a general election candidate for North West Leicester in 1950, and four times for

Right: Extract from a