

David takes on true-blue Goliath

By RON PIDGEON

ONE THING is certain following Labour's nomination of Coun. David Hill as their contender for Brighton Pavilion in the next General Election: the contest in this safe Tory seat will be livelier than ever before.

Although moderate by nature and in politics, Coun. Hill is extreme when it comes to election battles. That's to say he is extremely good at persuading people to vote for him.

His track record in two local elections proves this. Both times — once as a loser, once winning — he produced a swing to Labour.

He has a vote-winning tag, and he intends to put this to good effect against Julian Amery and anyone else who steps up for the next big polling battle in a traditionally true-blue area.

But, given all that, few people would put any money on a Labour victory in Pavilion in the foreseeable future, although Coun. Hill has convinced himself, and his party machine, that victory could indeed be theirs given the right climate nationally.

"I think it's fair to say that the party has never really fought Pavilion fully despite the fact that there have been good candidates standing in the past," he said. "But I have persuaded the constituency that Pavilion is well worth fighting for."

Confident talk indeed from one who on the face of it has very little experience to offer Pavilion voters. So who is this



man, Coun. David Hill, who today celebrates his 30th birthday?

He's a Brighton man, for a start, brought up with two brothers (one a twin) by his mother after an early divorce from her husband. "It was very hard going for her," says David.

He won a place at Westlain Grammar School which, he admits, was a great advantage. In fact, the experience of seeing his brothers go to "pretty rotten" secondary modern schools had a profound effect on him.

Postgraduate

David left Westlain at 18 with three Arts A-levels to study politics at Manchester University. He followed that with a postgraduate politics course at London University.

Keen on football and athletics at school, he was also weaned early to the Labour camp. "Growing up in such difficult surroundings ensured I would be a socialist," he said. By 17 he was a young and very able chairman of the Brighton Young Socialists.

His first job was teaching chil-

Labour's new hope for Pavilion glory

dren with learning difficulties at a Brixton school. "I felt how lucky I was to have had a good education and I wanted to help children who were less fortunate in this respect," he said.

Then he took charge of a department doing similar work at a school in Horsham, where he stayed for three years. A master's degree course at Sussex University followed, which he completed successfully.

Two years ago David began his present work, teaching teachers at Bognor College of Education. He would prefer, he says, to be working in Brighton, and hopes one day that the right high school opening will come along.

Meanwhile he is becoming more and more involved in politics at national and local level, and, of course, education features prominently in his electioneering make-up.

"I was opposed to the divisive secondary and grammar school system," he said. "But I feel that in comprehensives there must be a full range of courses for all types of pupils to give each child the opportunity to

develop fully the abilities and potential they have."

He also feels strongly that Brighton's sixth form colleges must not become the preserve of academic children but should cater for all 16-18 year olds who want to stay on at school, whatever their ability.

A good comprehensive system, and, for much younger children, adequate nursery and playgroup facilities are the twin educational ideals of Coun. Hill, and, indeed, his wife Marylyn, who is chairman of the Prestonville Playgroup and a speech therapist at a school clinic.

The couple have two daughters aged five and three — and family life is very important to David. This is evident in his other great concern: homelessness.

Heart-rending

"As a Brighton councillor I hear heart-rending stories about the housing problem," he said. "I think the council can be severely criticised for their housing performance in the past."

"Ideally I would like everyone to be able to afford their own home (he's buying his house in Port Hall Place on a mortgage) but in Brighton you need to be earning £70 a week just to buy a one-bedroom flat so obviously it is essential to have an adequate council housing pool."

His far from dogmatic attitude to house ownership is a reflection of his wish to see a property-owning democracy.

He also chooses to label himself a democratic socialist. He fervently supports the democratic system and is totally opposed to extremism, on both sides of the great divide between the far left and the right wing.